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# *The* Soviet Review

*Translations* IN SOCIAL ANALYSIS & CRITICISM,  
LITERATURE & THE ARTS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

JULY 1961

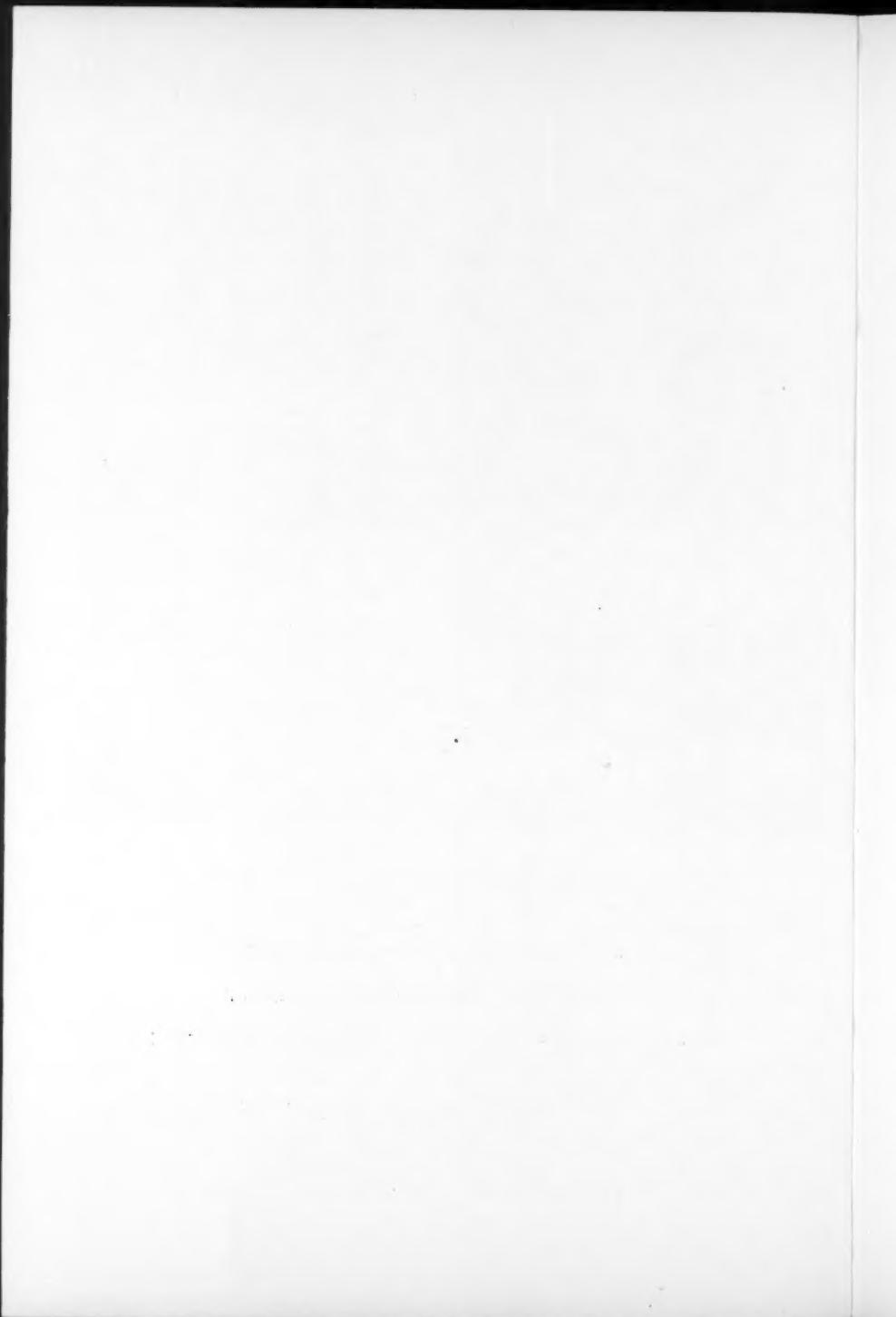
MEMOIRS OF ILYA EHRENBURG

*Mayakovsky Meyerhold Pasternak*

*Post-Revolutionary 'Left Art' Retrospect on Russia*

Atheism and Religion in the USSR

Allocation of the Soviet Labor Force



# THE SOVIET REVIEW

*A Journal of Translations*

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THE PURPOSE OF THE SOVIET REVIEW is to provide the American reader with a cross-section of articles published in Soviet periodicals in the fields of literature and the arts, social analysis and criticism, and science and technology. In each major area, the editors select the most representative, the most penetrating, and the most important articles published in the Soviet Union.

THE SOVIET REVIEW makes these translations available for information and research, and the publication of an article implies neither approval nor disapproval of its contents. The editors cordially invite correspondence from the readers.

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## People, Years, Life

### Memoirs of Ilya Ehrenburg

Ilya Ehrenburg's *Memoirs* have been recently published in two volumes and previously ran serially in *Novy Mir*, in the issues from August 1960 to March 1961. The memoirs cover a long literary and political career and include many searching sketches of Soviet and West European artists and literary figures as well as the author's own experiences. Below are several excerpts dealing with Ehrenburg's very personal relationships with major Russian controversial figures: Mayakovsky, Meyerhold and Pasternak. In the course of his reminiscences the author also discusses his own views on contemporary art and sketches in the forces forming the literary and artistic credo of post-Revolutionary Russia.

#### Chapter 5: Mayakovsky

I NO LONGER remember who introduced me to Mayakovsky; first we sat in some café talking about films; later he took me to his own place, a room in the San Remo furnished apartments in Saltykov Street off the Petrovka. Shortly before I had read his book, *Simple as Mowing*. I had imagined him exactly as he was — tall, with a heavy jaw, eyes that were in turn sad and stern, loud, awkward, ready at any moment to start a fight — a combination of athlete and dreamer, of medieval juggler who stands on his head to pray and uncompromising iconoclast.

On our way to the hotel he kept intoning the epitaph Francois Villon had written as he waited to be hanged: *I am Francois, which doesn't please me/Alas, a thief's death awaits me/And how much my behind weighs/My neck shall soon find out!*

The moment we were in his room he said, "Now I shall read to you . . ." I took a chair, he remained standing. He read me a poem he had recently finished, *Man*. The room was small, I was the only guest, yet he read as though facing a crowd in Theater Square.

Mayakovsky amazed me. Poetry and the revolution, the restless Moscow streets and that new art of which the habitués of the Rotonde used to dream lived within him side by side. It even seemed to me that he might be able to help me find my own way. But it did not turn out that way. Mayakovsky remained for me a tremendous phenomenon both in relation to the poetry and the life of the times. But he never had any direct influence on me, he remained both very close and infinitely removed.

It may be that this is characteristic of all genius, or perhaps it was characteristic of Mayakovsky himself — he used to say that poets must be "many-sided." He was the moving spirit of LEF, the New LEF, then REF\*; he wanted to attract many, to unify them, but the only ones to gather around him were his followers, sometimes his imitators. He told me how in the country, outside Moscow, he talked with the sun; he himself was a sun around which satellites revolved.

I used to see a good deal of him in Moscow in the years 1918 and 1920, then in Berlin in 1922, then in Paris, and again in Moscow and again in Paris (we met for the last time in the spring of 1929, a year before his death). Sometimes these meetings would be casual, at other times meaningful. I want to speak about my understanding of Mayakovsky. I know that what I have to say will be one-sided, subjective, but can the words of a contemporary be otherwise? It is easier to reconstruct the image of a man out of a multitude of varied, sometimes contradictory accounts. The trouble is that Mayakovsky, that passionate destroyer of myths, in an incredibly short time himself became a mythical hero. It is as though he were fated to be something he was not. We have the reminiscences of eye-witnesses who memorized a few of his savage jokes. We have the pages out of schoolbooks. Finally we have a statue. A teenager memorizes excerpts from *Good!* A housewife in a crowded bus anxiously asks the person ahead of her, "Are you getting off at Mayakovsky Square?" It is hard to talk about the man....

Until the mid-thirties Mayakovsky's name provoked passionate arguments. During the First Congress of Soviet Writers, whenever anyone mentioned his name certain people applauded violently

\*Left Art Front and Revolutionary Art Front, artists' associations—Ed.

while others remained silent. At that time I wrote in *Izvestia*: "We applauded not because someone would have liked to canonize Mayakovsky, but because to us his name stands for a rejection of all literary canons." Least of all could I have imagined that a year later they would indeed begin to canonize him. I did not attend his funeral. Friends told me that his coffin was too short. It seems to me Mayakovsky's posthumous fame turned out to be too short and, more important, too narrow.

First of all I want to talk about the man: he was in no way "monolithic" — he was big, complex, with a tremendous drive, a tangle of often contradictory emotions.

*The Dead Stay Young* — that was the title Anna Seghers used for one of her novels. Almost invariably later impressions blot out the earlier ones. Elsewhere in this book I tried to write of the young A. N. Tolstoy; he was one of the first writers I ever met. But often when I think of him I see him heavy-set, famous, with a loud laugh and tired eyes — the way I knew him toward the end. Right now I am looking at an old photograph. Next to Mayakovsky is A. A. Fadeyev, young, a dreamer with soft eyes. It is very difficult for me to remember Alexander Alexandrovich that way: I see eyes that are forceful, sometimes cold. But Mayakovsky has remained young in memory.

Until the very end he retained certain traits, or it might be more accurate to say certain habits, of his early youth. The critics prefer not to dwell on what is known as his futuristic period, although his lengthy later poems cannot be understood without a knowledge of those early ones. But right now I am not referring to his poetry, only to the man. Of course Mayakovsky soon left off both his yellow blouse and the slogans of the early futurist manifestos. But the spirit which dictated *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* remained — it remained in his behavior, his jokes, his answers to notes.

I remember the Poets' Café in the winter of 1917-1918. . . . It was a peculiar place. The walls were covered with incredible paintings and inscriptions. "I love to watch children dying" — this line from a pre-Revolutionary poem by Mayakovsky had been inscribed on the wall in order to shock the patrons. The Poets' Café wasn't at all like the Rotonde. Here no one discussed art, no one argued or seemed tormented; there were actors and there was an audience. The clientèle consisted, in the parlance of the day, of "bourgeois

whose throats hadn't yet been cut": black marketeers, litterateurs, others in search of amusement. Mayakovsky could hardly have amused them. Much in his lines was altogether incomprehensible to them and they merely sensed the existence of close ties between his strange words and the sailors promenading along the Tverskaya. But the song Mayakovsky wrote about the bourgeois who eats pineapples was clear to everyone: there were no pineapples in Nastasinsky Street, but a piece of vulgar pork would stick in the throat of many a man. What appealed to the visitors was something else. For instance David Burliuk would come on stage heavily powdered, lorgnette in hand, and recite, "I like a pregnant man...." Another attraction was Goldschmidt, billed as "the futurist of life." He did not read poetry but dyed two strands of hair with gold powder, was fantastically strong, broke boards in half and served as bouncer.

All this is in the past. About two years ago two American tourists arrived in Moscow: David Burliuk and his wife. Burliuk is doing well in America, he has made a name for himself; there is no sign of the lorgnette, of the "pregnant man." Futurism now seems to me more ancient than Ancient Greece. But for Mayakovsky, who died young, it remained to the end if not alive, at least close.

I often went to the Poets' Café and even performed there.... I remember one evening when A. V. Lunacharsky was present. He quietly took a table in the back and sat listening. Mayakovsky asked him to come on stage. Anatole Vasilievich started to refuse. Mayakovsky insisted: "Repeat what you told me about my poetry." Lunacharsky was forced to speak. He spoke of Mayakovsky's talent but criticized his futurism and mentioned how superfluous it was to boast. Thereupon Mayakovsky said that soon a monument would be erected to him—right there, on the site of the Poets' Café. Vladimir Vladimirovich was mistaken by only a couple of hundred meters: his monument stands not far from Nastasinsky Street.

A lack of modesty? Conceit? Many of Mayakovsky's contemporaries often raised these questions. For instance he made a celebration out of the twelfth anniversary of his work as a poet. More than once he called himself a great poet. He demanded recognition in his lifetime — this tied in with the period, with the idol-smashing of which Balmont complained, with the wish to attract attention to art by whatever means he could.

"I love to watch children dying...." Mayakovsky couldn't bear to

see a horse whipped. Once an acquaintance of mine cut his finger while at the Café: Mayakovsky quickly turned away. Conceited? Self-assured? Yes, of course, he had sharp answers for critical remarks, he insulted his literary adversaries. I remember the following dialogue: Note from a patron: "Your poetry doesn't warm one, it doesn't stir, it isn't infectious." Answer: "I am neither stove nor sea nor the plague." He inscribed copies of his books: "For internal consumption." All this is common knowledge; other things are less well known.

I remember a Mayakovsky evening at the Café Voltaire in Paris. Among those present was L. N. Seifullina. It was in the spring of 1927. Someone in the place called, "Now read some of your old poetry!" As usual, Mayakovsky answered by making a joke. Afterwards a group of us went to another café. . . . He and I agreed that I would call for him early the following morning. In the tiny room at the Hotel Istria where he always stayed his bed hadn't been slept in. He met me looking glum and asked without even saying good morning, "Do you too believe that my early work was better?" He was never self-assured; what was deceiving was the eternally-fixed pose. I believe that this pose was dictated rather by his intellect than his character. He was at heart a romantic, but of this he was ashamed; he would heckle himself with: "Who hasn't philosophized about the sea?" (this after some bitter reflections about his life) and his instant, ironical answer would be: "The waters." In his piece *How to Write Poetry* everything looks logical and smooth. In reality Mayakovsky knew all too well the tortures inevitably connected with the creative process. He spoke in detail about "preparing" rhymes. But there were other preparations of which he spoke less willingly: his inner torture. In a poem written directly before his death he wrote that "the ship of love was wrecked on the rocks of life": this was a tribute to the romanticism he so often ridiculed. In actual fact his life was wrecked on the rocks of poetry. Addressing posterity, he said what he did not want to admit to his contemporaries: "But I was subduing myself when I stomped on the throat of my own song."

He gave the impression of being extraordinarily vigorous, healthy, vital. But at times he was unbearably somber. He was abnormally concerned with his health; he carried a soap dish in his pocket and whenever forced to shake hands with someone

physically repulsive to him, he immediately went off and carefully scrubbed his hands. In Parisian cafés he would drink hot coffee through a straw, the kind served with iced drinks, in order not to touch the glass with his lips. He made fun of superstitions, but was always making wishes; he loved games of chance — heads or tails, odds or evens. The Paris cafés had roulette machines — one could bet five sous on the red, green or yellow and the winner got a token which paid for a cup of coffee or a glass of beer. Mayakovsky spent hours at those machines; whenever he left the city he would leave Elsa Yuryevna (Triolet) hundreds of tokens. It wasn't the tokens he was after — he simply had to guess what color would win. He even left a single bullet in the drum of his revolver — odds or evens again....

When Vladimir Vladimirovich talked with women his voice changed. Ordinarily harsh, insistent, it became soft. I found this mentioned in a book by Victor Shklovsky: "Vladimir Vladimirovich went abroad. There was a woman there, there might have been love. I have been told that they were so alike, so well suited, that people in a café would smile happily at mere sight of them...." Recently a poem of Mayakovsky's was published, addressed to T. A. Yakovleva, the woman mentioned in Shklovsky's book. And I have in my possession the manuscript of *The Bedbug*, which Mayakovsky gave Tata (T. A. Yakovleva) and which Tata threw out as something she didn't need. No, she did not at all resemble Mayakovsky, although like him she was tall and handsome. I don't wish to talk about what Mayakovsky so rightly used to call gossip, and only mention this episode (by no means the most significant one in the poet's life) so that I might once again show how little the living Mayakovsky resembled either the bronze statue of him or the folk hero Vladimir, the Red Sun.

When he was eighteen years old Mayakovsky enrolled in an art school — he wanted to become a painter. He never lost his painter's eye in his writing: his images are not conjured up but seen. He loved painting, he felt it deeply, he also liked to be with painters. He saw rather than heard the world. (He used to like to say that an elephant had stepped on his ear.)

Elsewhere I mentioned an evening at the Seitlins when Mayakovsky read *Man*. Vyacheslav Ivanov kept nodding approvingly. Balmont was openly restless. Baltrushaytis, as usual, was noncommittal,

Marina Tsvetayeva was smiling and Pasternak kept looking at Vladimir Vladimirovich adoringly. Andrei Bely did not merely listen, he seemed stunned and when Mayakovsky finished he jumped up in such a state of excitement he could hardly speak. Almost all those present shared his admiration. But Mayakovsky got angry at someone's cold, polite comment. This is how it always was with him: he seemed not to notice the laurels, he looked only for the thorns. His writings are a series of endless battles with the real and imagined enemies of the new poetry. What lay behind all those accusations? Could it have been a conflict with his own self?

I have had occasion to read a number of articles on him written abroad, in which the authors attempt to prove that the Revolution destroyed the poet. It would be difficult to imagine anything more absurd: without the Revolution there would have been no Mayakovsky. In 1918 he quite deservedly called me a frightened intellectual; I needed two more years in order to understand what was going on, whereas he understood and accepted the Revolution at once. He was not only attracted, he was completely engulfed in the building of socialist society. He made no compromises whatever, and when certain people tried to tame him he would bite back, "Face the villages! The task has been set for us — then take up your lutes, my poet friends! Please understand, I have only one face, and it's a face, not a weather-cock.... You can't cook up an idea in a little water; the water will warp the idea. No poet has ever lived without ideas, ideals. What am I — a parrot, a turkey-cock?" He never experienced any conflict in regard to the Revolution: this is the invention of those who will stoop to anything in the fight against communism. Mayakovsky's drama lay not in any conflict between the Revolution and poetry, but in the attitude of the LEF toward art....

Mayakovsky thought a great deal of Ferdinand Léger; they had a very similar understanding of the role of art in contemporary society. Léger had a passion for machines, for urbanism, he wanted art to be part of daily living, he never went to museums. He painted his canvases and created a good kind of painting, decorative to my mind, which in no way undermined our love of Van Gogh or Picasso but which was undeniably bound with the new era. Mayakovsky spent a number of years fighting against poetry not only in manifestos or articles — he wanted to destroy poetry with poetry.

LEF published a death sentence on art — "the so-called poets, the so-called painters, the so-called theater directors." It recommended that artists, instead of easel painting, concern themselves with the esthetics of machines, of textiles, of utensils; directors were to organize national celebrations and demonstrations and say goodbye to the framework of the theater stage; poets were to leave lyricism behind and write newspaper articles, poster copy, advertisements.

It turned out that to reject poetry was hard. Mayakovsky possessed both strength and courage. Yet at times even he went back on his program plans. In 1923, when LEF was still denying lyricism, Mayakovsky wrote *Concerning This*, a poem which even those close to him failed to understand and which even his allies rejected along with his literary opponents; yet he enriched Russian poetry with this work.

With the years his rejection of old art weakened. Toward the end of 1928 the New LEF announced that Mayakovsky had publicly stated, "I grant amnesty to Rembrandt." Let me again emphasize — he died young. He lived, thought, felt and finally wrote not according to plan — he was a poet. I remember with what admiration he used to speak about the new, industrial beauty of America in those distant days when the electrification of our own country was only a project and a dream, when dim little lamps glowed faintly on a dark, snow-covered Theater Square, announcing *Children Are the Flowers of Life*. I met him later after he returned from America. "Yes, of course, the Brooklyn Bridge is fine; yes, they have a great deal of machinery. But with it how much barbarism, how much inhumanity!" He swore and scolded, told me how happy he had been (by contrast) to see the tiny gardens of Normandy. The logical outcome of the LEF program, then, was condemnation of Paris, where each house was a bit of antiquity, and praise for a strictly modern, industrialized America. But Mayakovsky was now cursing America and, not in the least ashamed of appearing sentimental, making declarations of love for Paris. Whence such contradictions? Well, LEF was a magazine which lasted several years, while Mayakovsky was a great poet. In declarative stanzas he made fun of lovers of Pushkin, of visitors to the Louvre, yet he was in ecstasies over passages from *Onegin* and great classical painting.

He grasped immediately that the October Revolution had changed the course of history; but the details of the future he

could see only conditionally: not on canvas but on posters. Today we find it difficult to be entranced by the hygienic idyl of the last act of *The Bedbug*. The art of the past seemed to Mayakovsky not so much alien as doomed. His iconoclasm was a promise, an achievement. He waged constant battle not merely with this or that critic, not with the authors of sentimental novels, but with himself. He wrote, "I want to be understood by my country, yet they shall not understand me—well then, I shall storm over my native land on the slant, like slanting rain...." and he proceeded to cross these lines out, finding them too sentimental. But his native land did understand him in the end, it understood even the beautiful poetry he tried to throw away....

A great deal has been said about his suicide — about the failure of the exhibition of his literary work, about the attacks on him by RAPP\* members, about affairs of the heart. I am not fond of conjectures: I am unable to approach the life of a man I knew as one approaches the outline of a novel. I want to say one thing: people often forget that a poet possesses sharpened sensitivity — that is why he is a poet. Vladimir Vladimirovich used to call himself an "ox," even a "great ox"; he called his own poetry "behemoth," and at one meeting declared that he had an "elephant hide" which no bullet could penetrate. In reality he lived without even an ordinary human skin.

According to Christian legend the heathen Saul, when he became the apostle Paul, began to smash the statues of gods and goddesses. The statues were beautiful, but Paul was able to conquer his own sense of the beautiful. Mayakovsky was smashing not only the beauty of the past but himself as well: therein lies his greatness, but it is also the key to his tragedy....

Mayakovsky's fate has been extraordinary. Not long ago writers from Black Africa spoke to me about him — he has reached there too. He is circling the world. Of course poetry is always difficult to translate, and in addition much of his work is in a form which Mayakovsky used to insist was the form of the future but which is now dated. But as man and poet he remains young. Neither Aragon nor Pablo Neruda nor Eluard nor Tuvim nor Nesvalle ever wrote "in the manner of" Mayakovsky; but they all owe a great debt

\*Russian Association of Proletarian Writers—Ed.

to him — he taught them not new poetic forms but courage of choice.

It is necessary to be able to distinguish the contemporary from the purely momentary, the pioneering spirit from a search for novelties which a quarter of a century later will seem old-fashioned. One poet told me a few months ago that after the complex rhythms of Mayakovsky the use of rhymes has become impossible. This, of course, is simply naive. It is still possible to write using the simplest rhymes, or without any rhymes at all. In 1940 nine-tenths of our beginning poets were writing in "ladders," while today they imitate other models. Fashions change. Mayakovsky was beaten over the head with the books of Pushkin, Nekrasov, Blok. Is it a good idea to club our young with volumes of Mayakovsky?

I used to hope that Mayakovsky might be able to help me see clearly in a great many matters. I remember one night's discussion with him: it was in February or March 1918. We had left the Poets' Café together. Mayakovsky was full of questions about Paris, about Picasso and Apollinaire. He went on to say that he liked my poem about the execution of Pugachev. "You should be happy, instead you're whining. That isn't good." I heartily agreed with him: "Of course it isn't good." Politically he was right, I soon understood this; but we always thought and felt differently from each other. In 1922 he told me that he liked my *Jurenito*. "You have understood a great many things better than so many others." I began to laugh. "It seems to me I still don't understand much of anything." We met often, but not once did we really meet.

I have often thought and continue to think about him; sometimes I disagree with him, but I am invariably in awe of his poetic achievement. I pay no attention to his statue — the statue stands in one place; but Mayakovsky strides on — he moves through the new sections of Moscow, through old Paris, across all of our planet; he moves forward with his projected plans — not for new rhyme schemes, but new concepts and feelings.

### Chapter 6: Post-Revolutionary 'Left Art'

EACH MORNING the crowd carefully perused all the new decrees, still wet with paste, that appeared on the walls of buildings. They wanted to know what was permitted and what forbidden. Once I saw a crowd in front of a broadside headed *Decree No. 1 on Democratization of the Arts*. Someone was reading aloud: "With the destruction of the tsarist system there shall be no more storing of art in those warehouses and barns of human genius — in palaces, galleries, salons, libraries and theaters." An old lady wheezed, "Dear me, they're taking away the barns!" The bespectacled man who had been reading aloud explained, "It doesn't say anything here about barns, but of course, they will close the libraries and the theaters too...." The broadside was the work of futurists, and it was signed by Mayakovsky, Kamensky and Burliuk. The names meant nothing to the passers-by but all of them knew the magic word "decree."

I remember May First, 1918. Moscow was decorated with futurist and suprematist posters. On the facades of peeling houses, of empire mansions with columns, astonished squares fought rhomboids; faces with triangles instead of eyes looked out brightly. (The art which today is called abstract and which provokes much discussion both among ourselves and in the West was then being offered in unlimited amounts to all Soviet citizens.) May Day coincided that year with Good Friday. Worshippers crowded around Iverskaya Chapel. Past them lumbered heavy trucks (once the property of Stupin & Co.) all draped with abstract canvases; on the trucks actors were depicting tableaux such as "Stephan Khalturin's Feat" or "The Paris Commune." One old lady, looking at a cubist sheet with an immense fish eye on it, kept wailing, "They would have us worship the devil...."

I laughed, but my laughter was not gay.

I have just reread a piece I published in the summer of 1918 in the newspaper *Ponedel'nik* (Monday), entitled "Among the Cubists." In it I wrote about Picasso, Léger, Rivera. I said that we might see the works of these artists in one of two ways: either as "the crazy ornaments of a house about to collapse or else as the foundations of a system so new it hasn't even been seen in creative dreams."

Naturally it is no accident that Picasso, Léger and Rivera later became Communists. The artists who turned out in Red Square in

1918 were not the academically oriented ones but the futurists, the suprematists. Why then should I have been so troubled by the victory of these painters and poets who reminded me, even if superficially, of the closest friends of my early youth?

First of all it was their attitude toward the art of the past. We all know that Mayakovsky went on growing and changing, but in those days he was a passionate iconoclast: "If you find a White Guard—to the wall with him. Have you forgotten Raphael? Rastrelli? It is time for bullets to pepper the walls of museums. Shoot up the old rubbish with hundred-inch guns! We have set up guns on the edge of the forest—we're deaf to White Guard blandishments. Why not attack Pushkin?" This is what I could not understand. Often, while wandering through the streets of Moscow, I would recite Pushkin's poetry to myself; I remembered with love the paintings of Italian masters. When I came back to Moscow I almost instantly ran to the Kremlin. Fifteenth-century painting stirred me to the core—until then I had known nothing of the Russian Renaissance.

It is not difficult to understand Mayakovsky: his poetry met with laughter. The paintings of those artists who turned to futurism (Malevich, Tatlin, Rodchenko, Puni, Udalstov, Popov, Altman) were ridiculed in pre-Revolutionary days. After the October Days the adherents of classical poetry began packing their bags. Both Bunin and Repin went abroad. Those who remained were the futurists, the cubists and the suprematists. Like their Western counterparts, the prewar patrons of the Rotonde, they hated bourgeois society and saw a solution in the Revolution.

The futurists assumed that it is possible to change people's tastes just as fast as the economic structure of society. The magazine *Iskustvo Kommuny* (*The Art of the Commune*) wrote editorially: "We indeed do claim that we should—would be glad of the chance to—utilize state power to carry out our artistic ideas." Naturally this was more of a dream than a threat. If the streets of Moscow were plastered with decorations by cubists and suprematists, it was first of all because the academically-oriented painters were in opposition, not artistically but politically. Nevertheless the results were pretty sad. It was not just a question of the old lady who took a cubist canvas for the devil, but of the artistic reaction which followed the short-lived excursion of "left art" into the streets.

Discoveries in the field of exact science are demonstrable; the question of whether or not Einstein was right has been settled by mathematicians, not by the millions who barely know their multiplication table. New art forms have always been assimilated by the popular mind slowly, in roundabout ways; at first it was always only the few who understood and accepted them. And besides, it is impossible to prescribe, instill or dictate in the matter of taste. The gods of ancient Hellas drank nectar, which poets have called the drink of the gods; but had that nectar been forcibly pumped into the stomachs of the citizens of Athens, the end would doubtless have been an all-Athenian vomit.

Actually all this — not only arguments about who shall decorate the squares of Moscow, but "left art" as such — is now ancient history. Once again let me break the rules which demand that the writer of an autobiography observe chronological order: I am anxious to understand what happened to me, as well as to other poets and artists of my generation. I cannot say who tangled the threads — our artistic opponents or we ourselves; but I shall attempt to untangle them.

First let me talk about myself. I became fascinated by what at the time was called "constructivism"; yet I must admit that the concept of absorbing art into life inspired and repelled me at one and the same time. In 1921 I wrote *And Still It Turns*, a bombastic and naive book reminiscent of the declarations of the LEF movement (the magazine *LEF*, in fact, commented that "I. Ehrenburg and his group have much in common with us"). I kept saying that "the new art is ceasing to be art." At the same time I made fun of my own ideas. In that same year 1921 I wrote *Julio Jurenito*: my hero reduced to an absurdity the theses of *And Still It Turns*. I had Jurenito say: "Art is a hotbed of anarchy, artists are heretics, sectarians, dangerous rebels. And so, inevitably, it is necessary to forbid all art, forbid it exactly like the manufacture of alcoholic beverages or the import of opium.... The paintings of cubists or suprematists may be utilized in many ways—as designs for kiosks along the boulevards, for wallpaper decoration, new shoe styles and so forth. Poetry is changing into the language of the newspapers, of telegrams and business transactions...." I wasn't being a hypocrite — hypocrisy always goes hand in hand with fear or calculation. It was just that I didn't really believe in the approach.

ing death — loudly prognosticated by myself along with others — of all art.

Futurism was born at the beginning of our century in a godforsaken, technically backward Italy. It was an Italy where at every step one saw wonderful monuments to the past while the stores sold German cutlery, French pots and pans, and British textiles — the smokestacks of factories had not yet intruded into the exclusive society of ancient towers. (Today Northern Italy can compete with the most industrialized of countries, but neither will you find in it a single futurist who screams that all the museums must be burned down; while ex-futurists like Carra or Severini are frankly inspired by the frescoes of Giotto or the Ravenna mosaics.) The passion of Mayakovsky, Tatlin and other representatives of Russia's "left art" for industrial esthetics during the first years of the Revolution is understandable: those were the days when on the Sukharevka Market sugar sold by the lump and matches by the piece. In his *Mystery Bouffe* this is how Mayakovsky dreamed of the future: "Looming in the sky is a bulky expanse of transparent factories and apartments. Wrapped in rainbows stand the trains, the trolley cars and automobiles..." (When the artist portrays nature or the human heart his work does not date. No one will say whether the woman of the twentieth century is more beautiful than the Nike of the Acropolis created twenty-five hundred years earlier; the torments of Hamlet or the love of Romeo and Juliet are never ridiculous. But let a painter become fascinated with technological achievement, and his utopias will inevitably be surpassed or rejected by time. H. G. Wells was a highly educated man, he was sure he could foresee the future, yet the discoveries of modern physics have made his fantasy novels seem absurd. How could Mayakovsky have foreseen that streetcars would soon share the fate of horsecars and trains seem an archaic means of transportation?)

Picasso's cubist canvases were born not out of a nostalgia for machines but out of the artist's attempt to depict man, nature, the whole world free of accidental detail. Few today read the books of Metzinger, Gelser and other theoreticians of cubism, but the paintings of Picasso, Braque and Léger live on, continuing to stir us and give us pleasure or pain. Picasso considers himself the heir of Velásquez, Poussin, Delacroix and Cézanne. He never envisaged the electric train or the jet plane as heirs to painting.

Obviously art always seeps into everyday life only gradually, as it influences architecture, clothing, the language, gestures and household goods. Medieval poetry with its cult of the beloved woman helped the people to find forms for expressing their feelings. The paintings of Watteau and Fragonard became part of a way of life, changing gardens, fashions, dances, influencing the design of sofas and snuffboxes. Cubism helped contemporary urban planners rid cities of houses cluttered with gingerbread trimmings; it was reflected in furniture shapes, even in cigarette packaging. But such utilization of art, its decorative application, cannot initially be the concern of the artist himself; it merely flows naturally out of his creativity. If the process is reversed, there is creative impoverishment. A non-objective decoration may be wholly appropriate on textile or ceramic, but when it calls itself easel painting, this is no longer creative progress but regression.

Not long ago in Brussels I attended a retrospective exhibition of the work of Malevich. His early works (of the "Jack of Diamonds" period) are extremely effective. In 1913 he painted a black square against a white background. This was the birth of that abstract art which forty years later was to charm thousands of Western painters. It seems to me mainly decorative. Picasso's canvases are a whole world, they are so full of ideas and emotions that they evoke either delight or real hostility; but the canvases of the abstractionists remain the basis of textiles or of wallpaper. A woman may put on a scarf with nonobjective designs on it and such a scarf may seem attractive or ugly, becoming or unbecoming; but it will never start anyone thinking about nature, about life, about man.

The rapid development of technology demands of the artist an even greater understanding of man's inner world. In their defense of industrial esthetics the advocates of "left art" were quick to grasp this. Having once seen America, Mayakovsky announced that it was essential to "muzzle" technology. Naturally he was only thinking of the role of the artist, not denying the need for technological advances. At the time—in 1925—there was very little technology anywhere in Moscow. Mayakovsky realized that unless a humanist muzzle was placed on technology it would bite man to pieces. Meyerhold, forgetting biomechanics, was absorbed in *The Forest* (a play by A. N. Ostrovsky and a 19th century classic) and *The Inspector General* and dreamed of producing *Hamlet*.

Tatlin turned to easel painting; Altman was doing portraits; Puny became a master of the small landscape. As for forcible feeding with nectar, the apparatus for that changed hands — it went into hands far more adept at such operations.

Our museums possess superb collections of "left art" of the early post-Revolutionary period. It is a pity that these collections are not open to the public. It is impossible to remove one link out of a chain. I personally know many young Soviet artists who in 1960 are discovering America: they are doing, or more accurately would like to do, what in their time was done by Malevich, Tatlin, Polova and Rozanova. It may be that given a chance to examine the historical development of these earlier painters they would stop trying to turn the clock back to 1920 but would seek instead new forms reflecting our own times. Our young poets know the work of Khlebnikov, they value his craftsmanship, yet they do not try to ape him blindly. Why should Tatlin be more "dangerous" than Khlebnikov? Perhaps for the reason that the concept of the monopoly of a single trend has become particularly deeply rooted in the realm of the plastic arts.

Naturally the champions of our "left art" made many mistakes in the early post-Revolutionary era. People talk often and with gusto about the mistakes of those artists, writers and composers; yet perhaps it was not they alone who were mistaken.... Right now, as I look back, I think approvingly even about that great canvas which so frightened the old lady outside the Iverskaya Chapel. A great deal has been accomplished; and the essence always gets diluted. It is possible to discern welcome traces of "left art" in the works of many writers, artists, theater directors, film producers, and composers of subsequent decades.

I have never in my life been an ardent adherent of any single school of art. I have compared the young Mayakovsky with the apostle Paul who smashed the statues of false gods. Paul, until such time as he embraced the new faith, was called Saul. In 1922, when I was defending constructivism and editing the magazine *Veshch*, V. B. Shklovsky in his book *Tsoo* called me Paul Savlovich\* — which was malicious but apt. Throughout my whole life I have maintained my love for many works of art of the past, and this includes the

\*Paul, the son of Saul—Ed.

novels of Stendhal, the stories of Chekhov, the poetry of Tyuchev, Baudelaire and Blok. This did not keep me from hating imitations of the old and loving Picasso or Meyerhold. When all is said and done Paul deserves a patronymic, and it is better to carve out new statues than to destroy, even with the loftiest purpose, statues created long ago. To the sculptor who hammered out the likenesses of old Indian gods and goddesses in Ellora, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva were gods; to us they are men created by man's genius, possessing passions like our own but a harmony alien to us.

Idols have outlived their time not only in religion but in art as well. When worship of icons died out, iconoclasm died with it. But does this imply that the desire to say new things in new ways must also vanish? Not long ago I found in a current periodical the expression "modest pioneering." At first the words amused me, later they made me sad. The artist should be modest in his bearing, but never measured, never lukewarm or limited in his flights of creative fancy. It is far more noble to scribble in your own indecipherable hand something that is wholly yours, expressed in your own way, than to copy annals of the past in fine script. It seems to me that collective farmers portrayed in the academic manner of the Bologna school cannot give pleasure to anyone and that it is impossible to convey the rhythm of the second half of the twentieth century by means of that super-abundance of subordinate clauses which L. N. Tolstoy knew how to use so brilliantly.

### Chapter 18: Meyerhold and the Theater

WHEN I WAS a boy I saw V. E. Meyerhold a number of times at the Moscow Art Theater. I remember him as a crazy old man playing Ivan the Terrible and as an emotional, indignant youth in *The Sea Gull*.

Often at the Rotonde I would remember the words of Chekhov's hero: "... We must seek after new forms, We need new forms and if these don't exist, then we don't need anything at all...."

I missed my chance to meet Meyerhold in 1913 when he came to Paris at the invitation of Ida Rubinstein in order together with Fokine to stage D'Annunzio's *Pizanella*. I knew very little at the time about Meyerhold; but what I did know was that D'Annunzio was a phrasemonger and Ida Rubinstein a wealthy lady hungry for theatrical laurels. In 1911 I had seen *Saint Sebastian*, a play written by D'Annunzio expressly for that same Ida Rubinstein, and was considerably annoyed at such a mixture of decadent prettiness and perfumed voluptuousness. (V. E. Meyerhold made friends in Paris with Guillaume Apollinaire, who seems to have grasped at once that the important thing was not D'Annunzio, not Ida Rubinstein nor the décor by Bakst, but the inner turmoil of the young stage director from St. Petersburg.)

In the fall of 1920, when I did meet Meyerhold, he was forty-six years old and already gray; the lines of his face had become sharply etched, his prominent features were a pair of bushy eyebrows and an unusually long, hooked nose like a bird's beak.

The TEO (theater department of the People's Commissariat of Education) had quarters in a private house opposite the Alexandrov Garden. Meyerhold kept pacing about the large room, perhaps because he was cold and perhaps because he did not know how to sit in the executive's chair, behind the traditional desk with folders of papers "to be signed." He seemed to be talking bird talk. He was saying that he liked my *Poems About the Eve of Things to Come*; then suddenly he ran up to me and, throwing back his head that was like a gull's or a condor's, he said, "Your place is here. October in the arts! You shall be in charge of all the children's theaters of the Republic...." I tried to argue: I was no pedagogue, I had had enough of juvenile delinquents in Kiev and of the nursery group in Koktebel; moreover, I knew less than noth-

ing about the stage. Vsevolod Emilievich cut me off short. "You are a poet and children need poetry. Poetry and the Revolution! To hell with stagecraft! You and I will have another talk. I've already signed the order about putting you on our staff. Be on time tomorrow...."

Meyerhold was obsessed at that time (like Mayakovsky) with iconoclasm. He was not heading a department, he was waging a war against the easy esthetics and convenient morality against which the hero of *The Sea Gull* cried out.

Not long ago I appeared on television in Geneva. At the studio a very young girl stopped me and announced that she must put makeup on my face. I began to protest: here I was to speak about the hunger prevailing in economically backward countries, so what did beauty have to do with it—and besides it was unbecoming for me so late in life to start rouging my cheeks. The girl answered that rules were rules, that everyone must abide by them, and she covered my face with a thin film of yellow cream. It occurred to me that the light of memory is just as sharp as the light of a television studio and that as I mention certain people in this book I unconsciously cover their faces with paint to soften lines that are too sharp. But I have no inclination to do this with Vsevolod Emilievich; I shall try to picture him not in a softened but in a sharpened light.

He was a difficult person: kindness was coupled with impulsiveness, the complexity of his spiritual world with fanaticism. Like some other great men whom I have met during my lifetime he was morbidly suspicious, jealous without good reason; he often saw intrigue where none existed.

Our first disagreement was stormy but brief. A seaman had brought me a children's play in which all the characters were fish—in the last act the "fish sovnarkom" is triumphant. I felt the play lacked fire and I rejected it. Suddenly Meyerhold calls me in. The manuscript is on his desk. He asks indignantly why I turned the work down, and without waiting for my answer starts to scream that I am against revolutionary agitation, against October in the theater. Then, losing control of himself altogether, he calls for the Commandant: "I want you to arrest Ehrenburg for sabotage!" The other one refused to carry out the order.... Indignant, I left the building and decided that I wouldn't set foot in the TEO again.

The following morning Vsevolod Emilievich phoned me: he absolutely must have my advice about staging *Petroushka*. I went to see him and it was as though yesterday's scene hadn't taken place. . . .

Vsevolod Emilievich became ill. I went to see him several times at the hospital; he lay with his head bandaged. He spoke about his plans, wanted to know what went on at TEO, and did I attend the new productions. Doubtless he could detect some irony in my answers and accounts, because Meyerhold occasionally would rebuke me for my lack of faith, even my cynicism. Once, when I spoke of the difference between some of the plans and their realization, he sat up and began to laugh: "You in the role of director of all the children's theaters of the Republic! No, Dickens couldn't have imagined anything better!" The bandages seemed to be a turban and Vsevolod Emilievich thin and long-nosed, an Oriental magician. I too began to laugh and mentioned that the order which appointed me was signed not by Dickens but by Meyerhold.

. . . Meyerhold never traveled a straight and simple path; he always went uphill and his road was a series of loops. While his followers were still screaming from the rooftops that the theater must be destroyed, Vsevolod Emilievich was already busy with staging *The Forest*. Many were unable to understand what had happened with this incredible iconoclast: why favor Ostrovsky, why dwell on the tragedy of art, on love? (In the same way the followers of Mayakovsky failed to understand why in 1923, having sat in judgment on lyric poetry, he went on to write *Concerning This*. It is interesting that *The Forest* was staged shortly after the writing of *Concerning This*. Mayakovsky the poet had already gone back to poetry while Mayakovsky the LEF man harshly condemned Vsevolod Emilievich for returning to the theater: "I find the staging of *The Forest* thoroughly revolting. . . .")

Paintings hang in museums, books are available in libraries, but a production which we never saw remains for us nothing more than a dry theater review. It is easy to establish the connection between *Concerning This* and Mayakovsky's early poems, between the *Guernica* mural and Picasso's "blue period." But I find it difficult to guess what was the continuity between Meyerhold's pre-Revolutionary productions and *The Forest* or his *Inspector General*. There is no question in my mind that such continuity existed: loops may be loops, but they are part of one and the same road. . . .

*The Forest* was a stunning production and the performance stirred the audience. Meyerhold found new values in the old play—he conveyed the tragedy of art in a new way. Yet there was one detail in the production which exasperated (or perhaps delighted) Meyerhold's opponents: a green wig worn by one of the actors. The play ran for a number of years. Once after a performance in Leningrad there was a critical discussion during which Vsevolod Emilievich was flooded with questions. He was delighted, he was angry, he cracked jokes. "Tell us what is the meaning of the green wig?" He turned to the actors and said, looking puzzled, "Yes, just what does it symbolize? Who was responsible for it?" After that evening the green wig vanished. I have no idea whether Meyerhold was putting on an act or whether his amazement was genuine: he had completely forgotten this detail which he himself, of course, had invented. (I have often had occasion to hear just such astonished questions: "Who indeed was responsible for this?"—asked by the authors of various absurdities, some of them far more serious than that poor old wig.)

Meyerhold was like a scarecrow, a bogeyman to those who were afraid of the new; his name became a byword; certain critics did not notice (or else refused to notice) that Meyerhold was always moving forward; they criticized him for things he had long managed to forget.

Vsevolod Emilievich was never afraid to go back on esthetic concepts which only the day before had seemed to him correct. In 1920, when he was staging *Dawns*, he was through with *Sister Beatrice* and with *The Little Showcase*. Later he made fun of the "biomechanics" which were his own invention.

Trepnev says in the first act (of *The Sea Gull*) that new forms are most important of all, but later on, just before shooting himself, he sees something else: "Yes, more and more I am coming to the conclusion that it is not a matter of new forms or old ones, but of what a man is impelled to write without giving thought to form of any kind, to write merely because this is what flows freely out of his innermost soul." In 1938 Vsevolod Emilievich told me that the big argument was not about new forms versus the old, but about art itself—about art and its counterfeits.

He never gave up what he considered vital, he rejected isms, devices, esthetic rules, but not his own concept of art; he was in

a constant state of rebellion, he was inspired, he burned.

What was so terrible about the Chekhov comic sketches? There had been time by then to forget all about "left art." Mayakovsky had been recognized as a poet of genius. But Meyerhold's production was again attacked. He was the kind of person who could say the most ordinary things, yet there would be something in his voice, in his eyes, in his smile which exasperated the kind of people who cannot bear the creative fire of an artist.

In the spring of 1930 in Paris I finally saw a production of Meyerhold's *The Inspector General*. This was in a small theater on Goethe Street, where usually the local people were offered second-rate vaudeville or soul-searing melodrama. The stage was narrow and awkward, there was no lobby (during intermission the audience went out into the street); in other words the circumstances were pretty grim. *The Inspector General* made a tremendous impression on me. I had had plenty of time to cool off as regards the passions of my youth and had been afraid to go—I loved Gogol so very jealously. And suddenly I saw on stage everything that I saw in Gogol himself: the artist's painful anguish and the spectacle of incredible, harsh banality and coarseness.

I know that Meyerhold has been accused of distorting Gogol's text, of a sacrilegious attitude. Of course his *The Inspector General* had nothing in common with the performances I used to see during my childhood and youth; it seemed that the text was longer, yet there was nothing added—it was all Gogol. Would it be possible to believe even for a minute that an indictment of the provincial officials of the time of Nicholas I is the whole content of Gogol's play? Naturally to Gogol's contemporaries *The Inspector General* appeared first and foremost to be a savage satire on a social order and its mores, but like any work of genius it has survived its topical stage, it reaches people a hundred years after Nicholas' town mayors and postmasters have disappeared from the face of the earth. Meyerhold enlarged the framework of *The Inspector General*. Was this sacrilege? Why, various dramatizations of the novels of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky are considered noble works even though they put the originals into narrow frames. . . .

Andrei Bely not only loved Gogol, he was sick with his love, and it is possible that the many artistic failures of the author of *The Silver Dove* and *Petersburg* are due to the fact that he was

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never able to free himself of the hold Gogol had on him. And yet this man, having seen Meyerhold's *The Inspector General*, came out with a passionate defense of the production.

At the Paris performance the audience was mainly French. There were theater directors, actors, lovers of the stage, writers, artists; it was a parade of celebrities. Here was Louis Jouvet, here Picasso, Cocteau, Derain, Bati.... And when the curtain fell these people who, it would seem, were sated with art, who were accustomed to dole out their praise, stood up and gave an ovation the like of which I have never seen in Paris.

I made my way backstage. Vsevolod Emilievich was standing in a tiny dressing room. He was in a state. His white hair had grown even whiter, his long nose longer. It had been seven years... I said I couldn't resist coming to thank him. He embraced me warmly.

From then on there was no more distance or coldness between us. We never spoke of our early differences. We would meet in Paris or in Moscow, we had long talks and at times we did not talk at all, the way it is possible not to talk when people are truly close.

When Meyerhold decided to produce *The Inspector General*, he told the actors, "You see an aquarium; the water hasn't been changed in a long time, it's greenish and the fish swim in circles and make bubbles." He confided to me that while working on the play he often remembered the Penza of his school days....

He hated stagnant water, boredom, emptiness; he often resorted to masks for the simple reason that masks frightened him — frightened him not with the mystic terror of nonexistence, but with the frozen banality of everyday existence. The final scene of *The Inspector General*, the long table in *Wit Works Woe*, the characters in *The Mandate*, even Chekhov's comic one-actors — all of them are part of the same duel of the artist against banality.

That he should have become a Communist was no accident: he knew beyond doubt that the world must be changed. He based himself not on the arguments of others but on his own experience. To us he was an old man. Mayakovsky was born with the Revolution, but behind Meyerhold was a maze of paths he had already traveled: there was Stanislavsky, there was Komissarzhevskaya, the St. Petersburg symbolists and *The Little Showcase*, Blok tormented by snowstorms, *The Love of Three Oranges* and much, much more. Even in the days of the Rotonde we used to speculate what the

mysterious Dr. Dapertutto (Meyerhold's literary pen name) could possibly look like.

Of all those whom I have the right to call my friend Vsevolod Emilievich was the oldest in years. I was only born in the nineteenth century, but he lived in it, he had been a guest at Chekhov's house, had worked with V. F. Komissarzhevskaya, had known Scriabin and Yermolov.... And most amazing of all he remained unchangingly young; he was always thinking up something, he was like a thunderstorm in May.

He was always being attacked. In 1911 Menshikov of the *Novoye Vremya* (*New Times*, a St. Petersburg newspaper) was indignant over his staging of *Boris Godunov*. "I believe Mr. Meyerhold must have found the police officers in his Jewish soul and not in Pushkin, who has neither policemen nor knouts...." Some of the articles written many years later were, to tell the truth, no less dirty or unfair than the words I have just quoted....

He was no martyr: he passionately loved life—loved children and noisy meetings, fairs and the paintings of Renoir, poetry and scaffoldings. He loved his work. Several times I sat in on rehearsals: Vsevolod Emilievich not only explained things, he acted them out himself. I remember the rehearsals of Chekhov's humorous sketches. Meyerhold was in his sixties, yet he amazed young actors by being tireless, by the brilliance of his inventiveness and his enormous inner gaiety.

I have said that performances sometimes die—there is no reviving them. We know that André Chenier was a fine poet, but we can only take it on faith that his contemporary Talma was a fine actor. And yet creative effort does not just disappear; it may become temporarily invisible, like a river that flows underground. I sit in a theater in Paris, around me people marvel, "How original!" and I think back to some of Meyerhold's productions. I also often remember them as I sit in Moscow theaters. Vakhtangov once wrote: "Meyerhold has created the roots of the theater of tomorrow—the future will reward him." Not only Vakhtangov but Craig, Jouvet and many other first-rank directors all but worshipped Meyerhold. Eisenstein once told me that without Meyerhold he wouldn't have amounted to anything.

As far back as August 1930 he wrote me: "The theater may yet perish. Our enemies never sleep. There are those in Moscow to

whom Meyerhold's theater is not a mote in the eye, but a beam. Oh, it is too long and dull a tale to tell!"

Our last few meetings were far from gay. I came home from Spain in December 1937. The Meyerhold Theater was already shut down. As a result of what they had been through his wife, Zinaida Nikolayevna Raikh, fell seriously ill. Meyerhold got support from K. S. Stanislavsky, who often phoned him and did his best to cheer him up.

During that time P. P. Konchalovsky did an amazing portrait of Meyerhold. Many of Konchalovsky's portraits are merely decorative, but Peter Petrovich really loved Meyerhold and in his painting was able to convey his inspiration, his unrest, his spiritual beauty.

Vsevolod Emilievich spent long hours sitting alone, reading, studying artistic monographs. He continued to be daring. He dreamed of staging *Hamlet*. He used to say, "I think now I shall know how to do it. I never quite dared to before. If all the plays in the world were to disappear, and *Hamlet* remained, the theater too would remain . . ."

I want also to add that during those difficult days Meyerhold had the support of Zinaida Nikolayevna. I have before me a copy of a letter which Vsevolod Emilievich wrote to his wife in October 1938 from the country resort Gorenki: "... When I saw the fairy world of this golden autumn, saw all its miracle, I whispered in my mind: Zina, Zinotchka, look at all this loveliness and don't leave me, who loves you, my wife, my sister, mother, friend, beloved, golden like this golden autumn which can work miracles! . . . Zina, don't leave me! There is nothing in the world more terrifying than loneliness!"

We parted in the spring of 1938 — I was leaving for Spain. We embraced. It was a difficult parting. I never saw him again.

In 1959 the prosecutor told me how Vsevolod Emilievich had been vilified. He read me his statement: "I am sixty-six years old. I want my daughter and my friends to learn one day that I remained an honest Communist to the end." As he read these words, the prosecutor rose. I stood up with him.

### Chapter 20: Pasternak

B. L. PASTERNAK would come over almost every evening. I met him during the summer of 1917, shortly after my return to Moscow. I remember he took me to his apartment (he was then living off Prechistensky Boulevard). My diary contains the following brief entry: "Pasternak. Poetry. Oddity. Staircase."

I pick up another diary. The date is July 5, 1941. After the words, "The Germans say they have crossed the Berezina" and before "Five o'clock, Lozovsky," I read: "Pasternak. Madness."

1917 to 1941. . . . In the course of those twenty-four years I would meet Pasternak, at times very infrequently, at other times almost daily. It would seem there'd been time enough to get to know a man, even a highly complicated man, very well; yet often Boris Leonidovich seemed as enigmatic to me as at my first meeting with him; this explains the notation of 1941. I liked him — liked and still like his poetry; of all the poets I have ever known he was the most tonguetied, the one closest to music, the most attractive and at the same time the most exasperating. I shall attempt to describe him as I saw and understood him. This will be mainly the Pasternak of 1917-1924, when we spent long hours talking, writing to one another. We again met quite often in 1926, in 1932, in 1934 — in Moscow, then Paris in 1935, then again in Moscow — on the eve of World War II and again during its first few weeks. We never quarrelled but somehow tacitly separated; when we happened to meet we shook hands, we said we absolutely must see one another and parted once more until the next chance encounter. Naturally I don't presume to show the whole man, not even the young Pasternak, for there was a great deal about him which I never understood and much that I did not know; but whatever I put down will be neither icon nor caricature, but an attempt at a portrait.

I shall begin at the beginning. When we first met, Boris Leonidovich was twenty-seven years old; it was the summer of the year when, in Pasternak's own words, "we all lived thirsty and half-starved, having grown insensitive in the struggle, and no one took it to heart that the miracle of life lasts only an hour." I was distract and gloomy, Pasternak gay and in a state of elation. That year was for him especially memorable. "It was also unforgettable for the dust that swelled, for the wind that husked the seeds and scattered

them through the thistles, for leading me like a blind man through unfamiliar hollyhocks to seek and to beg at every picket fence." That year Pasternak experienced great depths of emotion for he was giving birth to the book *My Sister, Life*. This is how I described our first meeting: "He read me some of his poetry. I am not sure what made the deepest impression on me: his work, his face, his voice or what he was saying. I left full of sound, with a headache. The house door downstairs was locked — I had stayed until two in the morning. I looked for the doorman, but he was nowhere to be found. I went back upstairs but could not find Pasternak's apartment. It was one of those houses with passageways, corridors and half-stories. I finally realized that I couldn't get out until morning and humbly sat down on the stairs. The stairway was iron, night swarmed underfoot. Suddenly a door opened. I saw Pasternak. He couldn't sleep and had come out to take a walk. I had sat a good hour right outside his apartment. He wasn't in the least astonished to see me; neither was I astonished to see him."

Boris Leonidovich often spoke in interjections. One of his poems, *Urals for the First Time*, is like so much enraptured mooing. The strength of his early poetry lies in a first vision of life. In those days he was anything but a recluse, he liked to be among people, he was full of joy and the poetry of that period of his life is joyous too. He seemed fortunate to me not only because he had a rich poetic gift but also because he was able to create true poetry out of the humdrum details of everyday living. We were all at that time slightly sickened by too many high-falutin words abused by the symbolists: "eternity," "infinity," "boundlessness," "transitory," "ephemeral," "facets," "destiny," "fate." Pasternak wrote: "The great god of love, the great god of detail." The woman he loved he described as follows: "Let's not pretend you are of the vestals: you came in with a chair, you took my life down from a shelf and blew the dust off."

It was with reason that he called his book *My Sister, Life*: in contrast to both the older poets-symbolists and the majority of his contemporaries, he lived at peace with life. The realism of his poetry was unconnected with any program (Pasternak often used to say that trends and various schools were a mystery to him) but merely dictated by the nature of the poet himself. In 1922 Pasternak wrote: "The living, real world is the only concept of the imagination which

was once successful and which continued successful without end. Here it continues, every moment a success. It is still real, still profound, endlessly attractive. It will not disillusion you the next morning. It serves the poet as an example even more than as a model."

A young man told me recently that he felt sure Pasternak must have been glum, antisocial and deeply unhappy. But in 1921 this is what I wrote about him: "He is alive, healthy and a child of the times. There is nothing in him of autumn, of sunset or of other charming but inconsolable things." A year later V. B. Shklovsky, after meeting Pasternak in Berlin, wrote: "What a happy man. He will never grow embittered. He should live his life out beloved, pampered and great."

In 1923 Mayakovsky and O. Brik formulated (to use the jargon of the time) the strivings of artists: "Mayakovsky. Experiments with polyphonic rhythms in poems of broad social scope." "Pasternak. Application of dynamic syntax to a revolutionary objective."

All this may well be a surprise to all those foreign readers who only learned of Pasternak's existence in 1958. They see an ill-starred man in single combat with the state. In actual fact Pasternak was perfectly happy and lived outside society not because the particular society did not suit him but because, although he was highly sociable, even gay with others, he knew only one intimate: himself.

Toward the end of 1918 he was delighted with the Kremlin, that is, with the Soviet state. "It rushes awesome and undeterred through the year that is not yet over and into nineteen-nineteen. . . . Beyond the sea of these storms I foresee how the year that is not yet here will take me, shipwrecked, and will undertake to nurture me anew." (Pasternak did not yet understand that no one in the wide world would really undertake to "nurture him anew.") Later, in 1930, after Mayakovsky's suicide, he wrote: "Our state, our state which batters down the ages and is forever accepted by them, our incredible, impossible state. . . ." He spoke of blood ties between that state and Mayakovsky. He wrote enraptured lines about that same state "battering down the ages" as late as 1944. But his admiration was from the sidelines; even the greatest poet has not only his ceiling but walls too; society was outside the walls of the world inhabited by Pasternak.

Shklovsky was wrong on one count when he wrote, "This happy and great man could feel, among the people wearing overcoats,

munching sandwiches at the counter of the House of the Printed Word, the pull of history." Pasternak could feel nature, romantic love, he could feel Goethe, Shakespeare, music, old German philosophy, the picturesqueness of Venice, he could always feel himself and now and then those who were close to him, but never history; he could hear sounds that other ears did not catch, he could hear the heart beat and the grass grow, but never did he hear the forward movement of the era.

The word egocentricity is used so often it has become trite, besides which it has a derogatory connotation; yet I can find no other. Boris Leonidovich did not live for himself — he was never a mere egoist — but he did live within himself, with himself, and through himself. I keep remembering our early meetings — two trains rushing each along his own track. I knew that Pasternak listened to me without hearing what I said: he was incapable of tearing himself away from his own thoughts, his own feelings, his own associations. Conversations with him, even heart to heart talks, were like two monologues.

I remember one amusing episode. In the summer of 1935 Pasternak was in Paris for the Congress in Defense of Culture. A group of Soviet writers had arrived earlier, then Pasternak and Babel came to join them. Pasternak was in a bad mood, saying he hadn't wanted to come, that he did not know how to talk in public. In a brief speech he announced that it is unnecessary to look for poetry in the sky, that one should know how to stoop down — that poetry is in the grass. It may be that these words, or more likely Pasternak's own appearance, stunned the audience: he was given an ovation. Several days later he told me that he would like to meet certain French writers; we decided to invite them to dine with us. My wife telephoned Boris Leonidovich: come to such-and-such a restaurant at one o'clock. He was indignant. "Why so early? Better make it three o'clock." My wife explained that in Paris it is the custom to dine between noon and two o'clock, that by three all the restaurants are closed. Boris Leonidovich proceeded to announce, "No, at one o'clock I am not yet hungry...."

His self-absorption, which increased with the years, did not, nor could it, prevent Pasternak from becoming a great poet. More from habit than for any other reason we often say that a writer must be perceptive. In the recently published notebooks of A. N. Afinoge-

now there is the following interesting entry: "If a writer's art consisted of an ability to observe people, then the best writers would be doctors, police investigators, teachers, conductors, Party committee secretaries and generals. Yet this is not how it is. Because the writer's art lies in his ability to observe himself!" Afinogenov quite rightly discards the old concept of perceptiveness; in creating the protagonists of a novel or a play the author's own experience is what is most important — after all, the inner world of others is understandable to the writer only insofar as he knows and comprehends their passions.

But art is many-faceted. In lyric poetry the author explores himself; no matter how original he may be, his emotions — delight in a spring day or a sense of the inevitability of death, the joy of love or disenchantment — all these emotions are understood by the thousands and the millions. In order to write, "Oh how much more tenderly and fearfully do we love in the twilight of our years," Tyutchev did not need to observe aging men caught up in sudden passion; he merely needed on the threshold of old age to meet the young E. A. Denisova. The young Chekhov, in order to show in *A Drearly Story* the friendship between an old professor and his young ward, needed to know people, their emotions, their habits, their makeup and their ways of talking, even their way of dressing. Boris Pasternak, one of the finest lyric poets of our time, was like any other artist limited by his own nature; when he attempted in a novel to create dozens of other people, create a whole epoch and convey the climate of the Civil War, to recreate conversations on a train, he failed miserably — he was able to see and hear himself alone.

He was fascinated, especially toward the end of his life, by the mystery of the destiny of others. In one of his autobiographical sketches he tried to understand the experiences of Mayakovsky, Marina Tsvetayeva and Fadeyev during the last moments of their lives. As I read those conjectures, I couldn't help feeling rather embarrassed: Boris Leonidovich had a very rich heart, but he possessed no key to the hearts of others.

I shall not speculate on what he himself must have experienced during the last few years of his life; I no longer saw him; and even had I met him again I might not have known — a stranger's heart is darkness. I cannot understand why in that same autobiography he

should have denied his old friendship with Mayakovsky. I have a great desire to talk about that friendship, to which I was witness.

We used to make a joke of saying that Mayakovsky had a second voice which he used with women. I never heard him use that second voice, so uncommonly tender, so soft, with any man save one—Pasternak. I remember that in March 1921 a literary evening was arranged at the Press Club for Boris Leonidovich; he read from his own works and later the very young actress V. V. Alexeyeva-Meskhiyeva recited some of his poems. During the discussion period someone had the audacity, as we say in our country, "to note certain shortcomings." Instantly Mayakovsky got to his feet and standing tall, in a sonorous voice, began to laud Pasternak's poetry; he defended the other man with the vehemence of love.

In *Safe Conduct* (1930) Pasternak speaks of his relationship with Mayakovsky on the eve of the war, during the war years and the first years of the Revolution. "I was out of my mind over Mayakovsky," "I worshipped him," "the pinnacle of poetic achievement for me was Mayakovsky," "I almost rejoiced at the chance of first talking, as with a stranger, with my favorite" (this after one of their misunderstandings), "I felt Mayakovsky's presence doubly strongly; his existence was revealed to me with all the freshness of a first meeting."

Their quarrels were frequent and stormy. After one such misunderstanding Mayakovsky and Pasternak met in Berlin: their reconciliation was as stormy and impassioned as the quarrel had been. I spent the whole day with them; we went to a café, then had dinner and returned to the café. Boris Leonidovich read us his poetry; in the evening Mayakovsky spoke at the House of Art where he recited *The Spine Flute*, his face and body turned toward Pasternak.

Eventually they moved away from each other. Yet in 1926 Mayakovsky, quoting a quatrain of Pasternak's, "That day, from your comb to your toes," called it sheer genius. In telling about Mayakovsky's death Pasternak wrote, "I broke down and sobbed as I long had wanted to."

Why, in looking back over his past, did Pasternak try to cross out so much? Possibly this reflected disapproval of himself. I don't know. For me his last poems are closely connected with *My Sister, Life*, yet he himself seemed to have felt a break. They said he tried to

brush off all mention of his earlier books, he insisted that everything he had written before had been merely so many exercises, preparation for that single worthwhile work he had just written — the novel *Doctor Zhivago*. (Here as in many other things Pasternak repeated a pattern of delusion not uncommon among artists. I am now thinking of Gogol who felt that *The Inspector General* and the first part of *Dead Souls* were trifles and that he only found the right road when he wrote *Selected Pages from a Correspondence With Friends*.)

On reading the manuscript of *Doctor Zhivago* I felt deeply grieved. Long before, Pasternak had written, "The inability to find and speak the truth is a fault which no amount of skill in telling lies can camouflage." What shocked me in the novel was its artistic untruth. I am convinced that Boris Leonidovich wrote it with sincerity; it contains some amazing pages — about nature, about love; but too many pages are dedicated to what the author never saw and never heard. There are some marvelous poems in the back of the book; these only seem to underscore the spiritual inaccuracy of the prose.

I was never before able to convince foreign lovers of poetry that Pasternak was a great poet. (This of course does not apply to a few major poets who knew Russian: as far back as 1926 Rilke used to speak quite ecstatically about Pasternak's poetry.) Fame came to him from another direction. He once wrote, "Yet you whispered to me, messenger, not openly but secretly, of a settlement where not a single biped. . . . I too am neither this nor that. . . . I have lost my way. . . . It is not the right city, not the right midnight!"

I happened to be in Stockholm when the storm broke around the Nobel Prize. I went into the street and saw the newspaper headlines with the single name; I tried to make some sense out of it all, I turned my radio on — and all I could figure out was just "Pasternak. . . ." It was all frankly a matter of politics, of anti-Soviet politics — one of the episodes of the cold war. Not the right city, not the right midnight. Nor was this the kind of fame Pasternak had merited. . . .

I am convinced that Pasternak did not plan to do our country harm. His fault lies only in that he was Pasternak, in other words, that while he understood certain things marvelously well he was incapable of grasping other things. He did not suspect that his book

would become a vicious political sensation and that the blow would inevitably produce a counterblow.

Let me go back to his poetry. Once upon a time anthology editors used to like to divide the work by subject matter. Approach Pasternak with such a yardstick, and most of his poems will turn out to be dedicated to nature and to love; but I have an idea that his basic, unchanging theme was art itself — the same theme which produced Gogol's *The Portrait*, Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece*, Chekhov's *The Sea Gull*. "Oh had I known that this is how things happen when I was making my debut, that lines can kill with blood, fill your throat and kill you." And he ended this poem about poetry with an admission: "And here art ends, and the soil and fate breathe." He did not shoot himself, he did not die young, but he came to know to the full the price that must be paid for art — the power of lines which slowly, relentlessly kill.

Paul Eluard once said, "The poet must be a child even if his hair is gray and he suffers from arteriosclerosis." There was something of the child in Pasternak. His descriptions, which seemed so naive, so childish, are the descriptions of the poet. He once said of another writer, "How could he possibly be a good poet when he is not a good man...." When he first saw Paris he cried, "Why, this is no city, this is more like a landscape!" He used to say, "It is easy to describe a spring morning, but who needs that? But to be simple, clear and sudden as a spring morning — that's devilishly hard...."

At the time of which I now speak, when I went about feeling lost and at odds with the world, Boris Leonidovich was for me both proof of the vitality of art and a bridge toward living reality. Young, gay, handsome, reminding one of an inspired Arab — this is how I shall always remember him even though I also saw him turned old and gray.

This is how it had been for half a century — all of a sudden I begin to mumble some lines of Pasternak. They cannot be banished from the world: they live.

### Chapter 25: Retrospect on Russia

RICHIE now I feel like looking back, giving some thought to that early tangled skein of hopes and doubts.

I have said elsewhere that history is not made by magic edict; neither is it made according to that irrefutable logic which gives science its basic strength. As a youngster I had often heard it said in the P. G. Smidovich group that the road to socialism would be found by the proletariat of the world's most highly industrialized nations.

In 1946 a worker who lived in the "Iron Mirgorod", in other words, in Detroit, asked me, "Why do you keep talking about American capitalists, about monopolies, about exploitation? Do you think we aren't aware of all this? Of course we are. But still we with our capitalists live better than you without capitalists...." An absence of class consciousness? Of course. But that isn't the whole story; it's a whole different attitude toward life, the cult of creature comforts, fear in the face of achievement, of sacrifices, of the unknown.

Be that as it may, the first country where the socialist revolution was successful was Russia with its backward economy. Two out of three citizens of the young Soviet republic signed their names with an x. I had occasion in 1918 to spend some time in villages in the Moscow and Tula Provinces. In the peasant huts you found plush-upholstered armchairs, gramophones, even pianos either taken from country estates or acquired from city people in trade for a sack of potatoes. But the people still lived the pre-Revolutionary peasant existence described by Chekhov and Bunin. There was a great deal of cruelty, ignorance, darkness. They burned libraries. They hated the townspeople ("parasites") and there were those who rejoiced because the towns were starving. Perhaps this explains at least in part the bewilderment which at times overwhelmed the intelligentsia and which found expression in some of Gorky's writings.

The young people who had come to the cities and were caught up in the maelstrom of events easily accepted the over-simplified concepts of the "prolet-cult" extremists, the future members of the "On Guard" group. More than once I heard people say, "Why complicate things? The intelligentsia is so much offal. You've read the paper? Then everything is clear. The why's and wherefore's are just bourgeois talk.... Why bother your head about it...."

In the fall of 1920 V. I. Lenin had this to say to the members of the Young Communist League: "If a Communist took it into his head to brag about communism on the basis of ready-made conclusions, without having done a great deal of hard, serious, important work, without having examined the facts which he is under obligation to approach and consider critically, he would be a sad sort of Communist indeed. And such superficiality would unquestionably be disastrous."

I have already spoken of the thirst for knowledge which in those days took hold of millions of young men and women. The people opened their first primer. Now I must also speak about those who taught them their ABC's, who lectured on history or geology, who saved books from burning, museum buildings from vandalism, who, probably half-starved most of the time, continued to defend culture —about Russia's intelligentsia. I am now speaking, of course, not about that section of it which went abroad and there tried to villify its own people, but about those who, having accepted the October Revolution, at the same time remained full of doubt. When you reread the early stories of Vsevolod Ivanov, Malyshkin, Pilniak, H. Ognev, the first poems of Tikhonov, it becomes clear that these doubts stemmed from a desire to approach critically those same facts of which Lenin spoke.

On Strastnaya Place there hung a poster: "Hail electrification!" Under it Yesenin once read me the monologue of Pugachev which began, "Oh Asia, Asia, blue region covered with salt, sand and lime. . ." It was a good poem. But it isn't the poetry I am thinking of now. Criminal bands roamed the countryside. In the villages the food collection details were being fired on. The fields lay fallow. Homeless children wandered around railroad stations. The cities were hungry. The mortality rate increased rapidly.

All this seems ancient history now. "Blue Asia" is in the process of becoming industrialized, with the Soviet Union helping her. If toward the end of the 1930's some Western politicians still persisted in calling our country "a colossus with feet of clay," they were soon to be convinced that the "colossus" feet were thoroughly solid.

... When I look at Moscow today I can hardly realize that this is the city where I spent my childhood. You go to Vnukhovo Airport and each time you marvel — you see not just houses, but whole streets and developments mushrooming on the way.

True, our people are better at making jet airplanes than pots and pans; but in time they will learn how to make pots too. For the moment the Western politicos can talk of nothing but the ballistic feet of the "colossus."

By nature I am one of those known as doubting Thomases. (The adjective may be misleading. Thomas was deeply faithful and, according to Christian legend, bore up well under torture; but he could never take things on faith—he wanted to verify everything that others told him, that is, to approach facts critically.) During the years which I am now remembering—1920-1921—I had plenty of doubts, but those doubts were nothing like the talk of people who were sure that Russia was disintegrating, that the Varangians, bearers of order, would eventually come, that everything would end with the establishment of a moderate-liberal bourgeois system. There was one thing about which I was in no doubt whatever—the victory of the new socialist order.

Life was frightening: there was dried fish for food, there were broken sewer pipes, bitter cold, epidemics. But I knew, as did all those whom I considered my friends, that the people, having beaten the interventionists, would also beat the chaos. Julio Jurenito, as he speaks about the marvelous city of the future, all steel, glass and organization, exclaims, "That's how it's going to be! I speak of it here in pauperized, ruined Russia, for it is not those who own a superabundance of stones that shall build, but those who dare strengthen these unbearably heavy stones with their own blood...."

My doubts were not in relation to thoughts of houses, but thoughts of the people who would inhabit them. In Yuri Olesha's play the heroine draws up two lists: on one side are the "benefits" of the Revolution and on the other its "crimes." Later she recognizes her mistake, and the play is entitled *The List of Benefits*. I made no such lists—neither on paper nor in my mind. Life is more complex than beginning logic, many crimes may lead to benefits, and there are also benefits which are potentially crimes.

(Speaking of the darker side of our life people are prone to add, "the hangovers of capitalism." Sometimes this is true, sometimes not. Bright light intensifies shadows and good may bring some evil in its wake. Let me take a most glaring example—bureaucracy; V. I. Lenin wrote of it in his time and our newspapers continue writing about it forty years later. Is this paper-work dropsy, this

hypertrophy of those who register, verify, authenticate, pass judgment — is this merely a hangover? Is not such an ailment — which in time can and must disappear — connected with the development of the organization, the accounting and control of production, in other words, with that which is progressive and correct?)

I remember how the cleaning woman in the military-chemistry school, a young country girl, used to sing a *chastushka* [topical verses]: "I'll make trouble for myself, I'll go to the toilet without a pass, I'd be glad to get a pass, but there's no one can issue one." I laughed when I heard it, then I started to think about it.

The worker knows very well that a machine, no matter how complicated, is man-made and made to serve man.

Of course I was first and foremost concerned with the fate of art. A diagram which hung in the office of V. I. Bryusov not only amazed but rather frightened me. Literature seemed to be a lot of squares, circles, diamonds — screws in a giant machine.

I once admitted my doubts to Lunacharsky. He answered that communism must lead not to sameness but to variety, that artistic creativity must not be made to conform to one pattern. Anatole Vasilievich went on to say that there exist Derzhimordas\* who have no understanding of the nature of art. A year later he wrote a piece for *Pechat i Revolutsia* (*The Press and the Revolution*) in which he used the same definitions. After saying that during the period of transition censorship is inevitable, he continued, "But the person who says, 'Let there be an end to all these foolish myths about freedom of speech; under our communist system state direction over literature is appropriate, censorship is not just a hideous feature of the transition period but inherent in a well-ordered, socialized socialist existence' — the person who from this draws the conclusion that criticism as such must become a kind of denunciation or else a kind of forcing of artistic creativity into primitive revolutionary molds will merely prove, if you scratch him a little, that under his communist cloak there sits a Derzhimorda and that, be he given the least bit of power, he will get nothing out of it except the pleasure of bullying, playing the petty tyrant and especially of pushing others around."

\*Derzhimorda (literally, "shut your trap") is the policeman in Gogol's *The Inspector General*. The name has become a byword for ignorance and intolerance.

... During those years we all of us were romantics, even though we were ashamed of the word. I was at odds not with the epoch, but with myself. My ideas were far from clear. I was all for industrial esthetics, for a planned economy, abhorring the chaos, the hypocrisy, the surface gilt of capitalism (mine was not a book knowledge of it); yet more than once I asked myself what would happen in the new, more rational and just society to the diversity of human character; and wouldn't those perfected machines whose praises I now was singing supplant art, and wouldn't technology crush those sometimes vague but precious human emotions?

Forty years later I published in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* a letter from a young Leningrad girl. She spoke about a fine engineer who was contemptuous of art, indifferent to the tragedy of Manolis Glezos, equally cold to his mother and his comrades, and who considered love an anachronism in the atomic age. In that same issue I read a letter from a specialist in cybernetics: he made fun of any girl capable of "crying into her pillow," of anyone who in our time admires the music of Bach or the poetry of Blok.

Many of my doubts of the year 1921 were naive and were later taken care of by life itself; many, but not all. . . .

What I feared most was indifference, the mechanization not of industry but of human emotions, of art losing its vitality. I knew that the forest would grow tall and kept thinking about the fate of the warm, living tree, with its complicated root system, its unique branches, its heartwood rings.

Quite possibly those thoughts came to me because at the age of thirty I was about to take the examination to earn the right to call myself a writer. Of course I did not suspect what problems were ahead of me. But it was clear to me that it was not merely a matter of how to build a novel or turn a phrase. In one of his letters Chekhov said that the business of the writer is to take up for humanity. This may sound simple, but actually it is very hard. . . .

... A man, a writer may guess and understand a great deal, but certainly not everything. You see your own gray hair in the mirror when you shave, but to look into the future is far more difficult. It took me a long time to understand that a great many tough crossings still lay ahead and that the wind would not die down so long as the heart continued beating. . . .

## Atheism and Religion in the USSR

By E. F. Muravyev and Y. V. Dmitryev

The authors of this article attempt to define the religious person in the USSR, including such aspects as degree of faith, age, sex and nationality. They examine various social forces tending to produce religious belief and describe the efforts of churches on the one hand, and of atheist organizations on the other, to win adherents to their respective viewpoints. "Concreteness in the Study and Overcoming of Religion," *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1961, No. 3 — slightly abridged.

EVENTUAL SOLUTION of the problems of ideological struggle against a religious view and of instilling an atheistic outlook in working people depends largely upon the concreteness with which we teach scientific atheism. This presupposes an investigation in depth of the current status of religious feeling in our country, of the forms and methods of activity of religious organizations and the nature of religious ideology.

The present article undertakes to illuminate certain of these problems.

The gains due to the October Revolution, the elimination of exploiting classes and of private property in our country destroyed the social base on which the church rested. The Revolution deprived the Russian Orthodox Church of the enormous landed properties and monetary riches it possessed in tsarist times, when it was the greatest of landowners.

The growth and development of socialist transformations in our country, the triumph of the policy of industrialization and of the

collectivization of agriculture, undermined the social roots of religion. As a consequence the scientific, materialist outlook came to predominate in our country. Thanks to the triumphs in the building of socialism and communism, and to the work of the Communist Party in educating and informing the people, religion, a survival of the former ideology, is being increasingly forced out of the social consciousness of the working people and being replaced by a scientific view of the world.

In the course of the development of socialist society a fundamental change has taken place in the attitude of the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church and of other religious organizations toward the Soviet Government. Their direct support of the counter-revolution during the October Revolution, the Civil War and the first years of the building of socialism has gradually been replaced by a loyal attitude toward the Soviet Government. This transition, which became evident during the second half of the 1920's, was essentially completed during the Second World War.

Today vestiges of various religions — Christianity, Islam, Lamaist Buddhism and Judaism — are to be found in the USSR. The strongest religious organization in our country remains the Russian Orthodox Church. Also widespread are various other branches of Christianity, particularly the Evangelical Baptists. With the exception of a minority of religious personalities and of some sects, religious organizations are now loyal to the Soviet Government.

As a consequence of the fundamental change in social and economic conditions and of the rise in the cultural living standards of the people, a steady withdrawal of the faithful from religion has occurred. This process was particularly noticeable in the years immediately preceding the war. It must be noted that World War II had a vast influence in raising the political consciousness of the masses and in intensifying Soviet patriotism. It reinforced the political and moral unity of our society. At the same time the difficulties of the war had a negative effect upon the movement of the masses toward atheism. The death of many near and dear to them, the sufferings and misery of millions, caused among a certain portion of the people a return toward religion, a revival of hope for help from supernatural forces.

The postwar years saw a revival of religious moods and prejudices among some of our people. Increased activity on the part

of the religious and lessening attention to atheistic propaganda resulted in a relative rise in the number of members of breakaway sects — chiefly at the expense of the Orthodox Church, but also from among persons of vacillating views — in certain portions of our country. The influence of the capitalist world camp further complicated this process.

Prior to World War II our anti-religious press sometimes offered inaccurate evaluations of the rise in atheism among the working people of the USSR. It is true that at that time we scored great successes in causing the masses to abandon religion. But these triumphs were overestimated. Most important, however, is the fact that this abandonment of religion was not always firm, and as a consequence there were some resumptions of religious beliefs during World War II and the postwar period.

From this we may conclude that the process of abandonment of religion by the faithful is complex and contradictory. As we know, the dying off of the old way of life never takes place quietly. On the contrary, there is a fierce struggle for existence by the forces favoring the old ways, flare-ups and returns to the past. The defenders of the old ideas make use of every weakening of ideological work to strengthen the influence of bourgeois ideology upon the masses of the people.

The last few years have seen a noticeable reduction in religious belief among the people, due to the successful building of communism, the progress of science and technology and practical improvement in scientific and atheist work. There has also been improvement in enforcing Soviet legislation with respect to religious cults and the correction of errors previously made in this respect. This testifies to the fact that the revival of religious moods observed in some cases was caused primarily by increased activity of religious organizations and the weakness of the teaching of scientific atheism among the masses.

Closer familiarity with demographic data would be necessary in order to arrive at a more precise characterization of the status of religious belief among the people of our country.

Unfortunately, it must be observed that no study of this status has been made in the postwar years; hence generalized data on the forms and degrees of religious adherence among workers, peasants and intellectuals is lacking. This is a manifestation of the

general backwardness of ethnographic study of the way of life of the Soviet people at the present time. The prominent Soviet ethnographer, Prof. S. A. Tokarev, author of the recently-published *Etnografija narodov SSSR* (*Ethnography of the Peoples of the USSR*), notes that "yawning gaps" will be found in that study. Although factual data is being accumulated, it is not being given scientific theoretical generalization. In view of the fact that this is the status of the scientific elaboration of the problem in question we shall, in the present article, work with data gathered in the course of our personal observations and investigations. Although these data are local in nature, they do permit us to speak of certain general trends.

Before proceeding to a demographic description of religion among our population it is necessary to define in general terms the religious person of today.

We cannot ignore the fact that the profile of the religious individual has changed during the Soviet era. Today the religious collective farmer or worker is above all else a member of Soviet society who is taking a direct part in the building of communism. Socialist ideology could not help but influence the consciousness of the "faithful." The general rise in our cultural level has also had its effect: in the mind of the religious person of today the supernatural has become intertwined with scientific knowledge, the ideas of socialism with religious prejudices.

The emotion of Soviet patriotism is common to all our citizens, including the religious. The political consciousness of the Soviet population is growing; it is also rising among the vast bulk of the religious. But the strength of old tradition, of old and deep-rooted religious survivals, slows down the growth of this consciousness.

The fundamental changes in the living conditions of the working masses, the growth of atheism, the exposure of the anti-scientific essence of religion has in many ways affected the attitude of the religious toward the essence of a religious world view and also toward the dogmas and practices of the church. All this must be borne in mind when we speak of the characteristics of religious moods.

Today it is often difficult to determine whether a person is religious or not. For although such external manifestations as church attendance or performance of religious rites do testify to religious belief, they do not always reveal the true degree of this belief.

The complexity and contradictory nature of the process of transition from faith to agnosticism and atheism may be judged by the multiplicity of types of religious persons.

As correctly noted in the journal *Sovetskaya Etnografia* (see No. 2 of this journal for 1957), the first type includes the fanatics who actively expound and defend their views. They are sincerely convinced of the truth of the teachings of their religious faith and seek to adhere to these principles. These are primarily adherents of non-Orthodox denominations, persons for whom problems of religion are matters of deep inner conviction, and it is in this spirit that they seek to raise their children. Members of these denominations regard the family, and particularly women, as the chief target of their efforts.

Another category consists of people who, although describing themselves as religious, do not impose their beliefs upon others and are tolerant of atheism. It is from among these people that those who begin to doubt the teachings of religion chiefly come. For the majority of these a purely formal attitude toward religious practices is characteristic. They perform them more as a matter of tradition than by way of conscious conviction. In this sense they are considerably less religious than the Baptists who, although they do not christen their children (with them, christening is done upon the attainment of one's majority), nevertheless raise them to be deeply religious people.

There is yet another category affected to some degree by the narcotic of religion. Many people, having abandoned religion personally, have not yet decided to admit this openly and fail to speak out against religion out of a false delicacy or an unwillingness to spoil their relationships with relatives and friends who are still faithful.

People of this type have their children christened more as a matter of tradition or from a fear of condemnation on the part of the faithful. For example, in the Belorussian village of Starosek, a young woman who was asked why she had her children christened answered: "I wasn't taught to give prayer and I don't teach my children that, but everybody else christens their children, so I do too" (*Sovetskaya Etnografia*, 1957, No. 2, p. 57).

Thus performance of the sacraments (christening, etc.) still is no gauge of how religious a person is. However, a person who by

force of tradition or from a fear of the opinion of the religious tips his hat toward religious prejudice cannot because of his inconsistency be considered a conscious atheist. We must help such people acquire a consistent scientific world outlook.

In addition to the conscious atheists and the faithful we still have a large middle group of vacillating people. These are people who, although they do not perform any of the rites of religion, lack firm convictions on the subject. Unless they are wholly re-educated and given a scientific world outlook, they may again become believers. After all even the most conscious individuals of our Soviet society, the Communists, undergo education by the Party. But it often happens that if a person has abandoned religion no further attention is paid to completing his re-education or to giving him a scientific and materialist world outlook. It is this which creates the preconditions for the success of religious propaganda among a portion of these vacillating individuals.

All this must be borne in mind in analyzing data of a demographic nature, descriptive of certain social strata of our society, from the point of view of the distribution of survivals of religiosity among them.

We quote data on the Kremenets congregation in Ternopol Region. This congregation consists of 199 Evangelical Baptists. Its make-up is clearly evidenced by the table below (the data pertain to 1958):

<i>Social status</i>		<i>Sex</i>		<i>Education</i>		<i>Age</i>	
Workers	24	Women	135	Barely literate		Above 40	130
Peasants	156	Men	64	or with ele- mentary edu- cation	190	25 to 40	50
Office workers	6					Under 25	19
Invalids and pensioners	13			With secondary school edu- cation	9		

On the whole, this is the picture existing also in other regions. Thus, in Belgorod Region, with 1,227,000 inhabitants, the Evangelical Baptists number 1,898 members. Of these 1,506 are women, 1,218 are hardly literate and 892 are over 60.

As we see, the ratio of Baptists to the population in Belgorod Region is negligible — 0.15%. But the existence even of this insignificant number should be a matter of concern to us, for we are moving

toward a communist social order which is to be completely free of the survivals of religion.

These data are typical of other denominations as well. As may be seen from the foregoing and from other similar data, religion exists in our country primarily among the collective farm peasantry. Workers are subject to the influence of religion to a substantially smaller degree. This may be explained by the fact that the working class of our country is concentrated in large industrial and cultural centers and is more strongly affected by progressive, socialist ideology. This is also testified to by the fact that workers who have not yet been liberated from the influence of religion are to be found in towns where industry is small, and in factories and plants in rural localities (primarily in light and processing industries).

This higher percentage of religious belief among the collective farm peasantry can be explained primarily by the fact that the traditions of the old, conservative way of life are still felt in the countryside. Although there can be no doubt that the life of the collective farm peasantry has witnessed fundamental changes in the Soviet era, adherence to various old customs and traditions are still strong.

V. I. Lenin wrote that the force of tradition, of habit, is a terrible force. It is specifically the force of tradition, or fear of condemnation by relatives and acquaintances, that causes people to christen a child, get married in church and observe religious holidays.

In addition, the existence of religion among the collective farm peasantry may be explained by the neglect of mass cultural work in the villages, and the sad state of affairs in many rural centers for the dissemination of culture. Unfortunately these shortcomings have not been overcome everywhere. A person seeking to satisfy his spiritual needs frequently is left to his own devices and as a consequence his soul may become the concern of a religious preacher — often with regrettable results.

In this connection we cannot omit the fact that the well-being of collective farmers depends not only upon their labor and the amount and quality of available equipment, but sometimes upon the caprices of nature, which man has not yet learned fully to control. This still gives rise to a lack of confidence which in some people manifests itself in the retention of religiosity.

The reasons for the widespread existence of religious survivals among the peasantry becomes clearer upon analysis of the distribution of the faithful by sex. Women, and primarily aged women, constitute a large portion of the faithful among the communicants of both the Orthodox Church and non-Orthodox congregations.

Precise data on the sex ratio among the Orthodox do not exist. However, on the basis of various facts available to researchers in this field, it may be stated that about 75 to 80% of all the faithful are women.

The October Socialist Revolution destroyed the economic and political oppression compelling women to turn to religion. Women are granted all rights along with men. Never in history has woman occupied a position as high as she does today in the lands of socialism. The Communist Party and the Soviet Government have done much to ease woman's housework. Each year sees an increase in the construction of restaurants, day nurseries, kindergartens, laundries, etc. However, despite the ever-increasing number of institutions to ease the work and position of women, these are still clearly inadequate. Concern for the family, the children, the household falls entirely upon the woman. As a consequence the woman's working day is considerably longer than that of the man, particularly in the case of collective farm women who must spend more time in the kitchen than do urban women. In Lenin's words, housework is the most unproductive of all occupations and includes nothing that can contribute to woman's development. On the contrary, it limits her outlook and saps her will. It is not an accident, therefore, that a large percentage of women who are religious prove to be housewives. Thus the Belgorod Evangelical Baptist congregation numbers 739 housewives among its 1,506 members. The fact is that we do virtually no work among women as individuals, particularly religious women. The need for such work is the more pressing because today church organizations, and particularly the Protestants, give major attention to individual work with women. The leaders of the Orthodox and Protestant Churches take advantage of the role of women in the family and in the upbringing of children. They see them as the repository of family traditions and of the most conservative principles of household life, providing sanctuary for the most varied religious prejudices. The fact that it is woman who is the chief stronghold of the conservative traditional

way of life is often disregarded by our propagandists but is most skilfully utilized by persons active on behalf of religion.

In the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, "Goals of Party Propaganda Under Present-Day Conditions," particular emphasis is laid upon the importance of and need for propaganda among women "to elevate their ideological standards and interests, and to involve women, particularly housewives, in active social and political life and the struggle against religious prejudices...."

The fact that she is engulfed in both production labor and house-work often deprives a woman, particularly in the countryside, of the possibility of improving her education. It is not accidental that a majority of the religious women are barely literate or have merely elementary schooling.

Turning now to the age composition of the religious, we see from the data that the vast majority are people of advanced years (past fifty), that considerably fewer are people of middle age and particularly few are young. This is explained by the fact that in our country the doors to life are wide open to the youth. Its ties to the old way of life are weakest of all; youth reaches for the new, for light, for science. Soviet youth, energetic and full of the sap of life, is not attracted by the idea that our life on earth is of merely transitory significance. Books, motion pictures, the theater, have become its constant companions.

Particularly important is the fact that churches are deprived of such means of influencing the younger generation as the school since in our country the school is separated from the church. The family is the most important channel through which churches seek to disseminate their influence upon the young. At present adherents of the Orthodox Church and of Protestant sects are particularly concerned with drawing youth into their ranks.

It must be noted that the activities of the religious among the youth have met with some success. The Orthodox Church and the minor denominations, recognizing the fact that it has been chiefly elderly people who have remained in religious organizations, are striving to reduce the age level of their ecclesiastics by attracting recent seminary graduates.

The clergy conduct their work among the youth with the object of bringing the most educated and cultured into their ranks. The

years prior to 1957 saw an increasing number of applications for admission to religious seminaries. However, starting in 1958 there has been a substantial decrease as a consequence of the strengthening of anti-religious work. In 1959-1960 some of the seminaries had considerably more room for applicants than there were persons interested. This was the case in the Stavropol Seminary. The local propagandists of atheism, headed by I. O. Rudenko, carried out extensive individual work with the students. As a consequence 14 persons quit the seminary in 1959 and five more early in 1960. Individual work was also carried out with young persons who had applied for admission. As a consequence there was no freshman class at all last year.

Recently, as a consequence of improvement in scientific atheist activities, abandonment of the minor denominations by young people is on the increase. Some of them (the former Baptist Lepikhov in the Donbas, the former piatidesiatnik Miachin from the Far East, and others), having broken with their congregations, have been speaking out to expose the activities of these bodies and of religious prejudice in general.

In order to successfully overcome religious prejudices existing among some of our young people it is necessary for our propaganda of scientific atheism to be vivid, vital and popular, so that it might help bring up our younger generation in a spirit of optimism that rejoices in life and of unswerving confidence in the ultimate triumph of communism.

Turning now to the characteristics of religious belief among our population in terms of nationality, we may say that religious prejudices have remained most strongly entrenched among those of our people who lived under conditions of feudal or patriarchal relationships (the Central Asian republics and the Siberian tribes). It should also be noted that in the Central Asian republics, where Islam is strong, a resurgence of various faiths that existed prior to and alongside of Islam is to be noted. Soviet ethnographers, writing on the relationship between Islam and archaic faiths in Uzbekistan, state:

"A different situation has come into being with respect to the complex of religious concepts and acts — animist, magical, ancestor and nature worship, worship of holy men and their graves, witch-doctor practices — that persisted alongside Islam. The fact that

this complex always had its roots in family life, one of the most conservative units in society, is the explanation for its significance in our day. Woman is the repository of archaisms of this type. In this sense one may speak of a particular kind of 'woman's religion' (*Sovetskaya Etnografia*, 1957, No. 2, p. 62).

This kind of religion is still significant among the population of areas where socialist transformations are recent. This pertains to Moldavia, Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia, and also to the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia. In these republics the reactionary Roman Catholic clergy seek by all possible means to maintain national and religious prejudices. But the invigoration of the propaganda of scientific atheism is giving rise to a decline in religious moods there, particularly in the Moldavian SSR.

The foregoing analysis makes it possible to evaluate the reasons for the retention of religious belief among a portion of our working people. The factors inhibiting the process of dying-out of religious prejudices may be broken down into objective and subjective.

The former fall within the scope of a general sociological law — the fact that social consciousness lags behind the surging advance of the life of society. As it affects religion, this law is manifested in the high conservatism of religious consciousness which developed on the basis of pre-socialist forms of economic life, the class oppression these gave rise to, the limited, humdrum life patterns intimately related to traditional customs and habits. The effects of this law should not however be exaggerated. Under socialism, and as a consequence of the fact that Soviet people are consciously building a new society, the degree to which social consciousness lags behind the life of society diminishes constantly. In a socialist society there is an extraordinary rise in the role of the subjective factor. We emphasize this fact because some of our cultural workers are attempting to use this general law to justify their own ideological passivity in the struggle with a religious world outlook.

Another important social factor in preserving carry-overs of religion is the influence of the capitalist world, which has a profound interest in preserving and reseeding the prejudices of religion in the consciousness of our people. Every medium — radio, the press and so forth — is employed by capitalist propaganda to revive religious prejudices. The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and other stations transmit special religious broadcasts for the

working people of the various nationalities inhabiting the USSR. It is entirely clear that the preservation and revival of religious tradition among the people of the USSR is very important to the imperialists. Such a revival would be of great aid in the struggle against socialism.

The foregoing are only the general causes of the existence of religious prejudices. Specific causes vary greatly in various strata of the population and in persons of various age groups. They are rooted in the historical, geographical and living conditions. The emotional aspect of human life plays an enormous role here. In the majority of cases this aspect is the main one.

Nevertheless these factors fail to provide a full answer as to why religious prejudice continues to exist in our country. These general factors cannot explain why in the period of vast transformations of the life of our country, of improvement in the well-being of the masses and progressive elimination of the contradiction between physical and mental labor, between town and country, there should be a revival of religiosity among certain strata of our population.

We must therefore take subjective factors into consideration. The dying away of religion and the growth of atheism is a predictable process. But it is precisely for this reason that the subjective factors in this process have become pronouncedly more important. The carriers of the ideology of the old, represented by the clergy, strive in every possible way to inhibit and retard the steady process of the dying-off of religion. In his speech at the First Congress of Working Women V. I. Lenin observed that we "...may thank the influence of the clergy" for the existence of various religious prejudices (*Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 161). By making use of weakness in the propaganda of our socialist ideology, by speculating on the complexity and contradictions of the life of society, the advocates of religion have vigorously developed a world view hostile to us.

In our opinion two subjective factors, increased activity on the part of proponents of religion and current weaknesses in our atheist propaganda, are the prime factors explaining the existing religiosity of the backward section of the working people. It is these subjective factors that acquire decisive significance in the present stage.

The rise in the activity of the churches among the broad masses is manifested in the fact that they are now employing various carefully thought-out methods of attracting people to religious organizations. This systematic activity is often successful. Adapting themselves to the conditions of today, the churches are modernizing their religious ideology. At the same time they strive to perfect their forms and methods. They give special attention to strengthening their missionary work and propagation of the faith.

Recently the monasteries have become active centers of the dissemination of religious ideas and moods. This is particularly true of certain famous and respected ones, such as the Troitse-Sergeevskaya at Zagorsk, Moscow Region, the Kievo-Pecherskaya at Kiev, the Pochayevskaya in Ternopol Region, and the Pskovo-Pecherskaya in Pskov Region.

The monks travel widely, propagandizing their "sacred relics." They conduct a heavy correspondence with their flocks and strive to gain converts among young people visiting the monasteries. Returning pilgrims conduct active propaganda in their home communities.

The members of minor denominations make use of an even greater variety of means to influence the psyche of the religious than the Orthodox Church. The use of music and choral singing along with services has the purpose of creating a special state of reverence among the faithful. The hymns very often employ the motifs of popular Soviet and folk songs and are not lacking in poetry.

In striving to attract the young, in taking advantage of the weakness of our cultural work in some districts, the members of these denominations establish choral and musical groups and arrange social evenings in connection with family celebrations at which sermons on religious morality are read. The denominations also have celebrations of Soviet holidays, such as picnics on May Day. The leadership of the Evangelical Baptists has recently instructed its congregations to perform their work not in breadth but in depth, paying prime attention not to increasing the number of adherents but to reinforcing the religiosity of those who already belong. Members of these sects place particular emphasis upon individual work with the faithful. The subject of individual work is usually someone who has suffered failure in life. Charity is

extended to such an individual and attempts made to affect his consciousness and draw him into the congregation. Attempts are also made to influence the student youth.

From these facts we may safely conclude that wherever scientific atheist activity is poorly conducted, the churches will take advantage of the situation. Contrariwise, wherever our atheist activity becomes stronger religious feelings diminish. This is testimony to the ever-increasing importance of the subjective factor in overcoming religious prejudice during the period of full-scale building of communist society.

We cannot close our eyes to the shortcomings in our propaganda of scientific atheism. The training of skilled personnel is still on a low level. Active Party, trade union and Komsomol members and intellectuals with good theoretical grounding are inadequately involved. The most important media for bringing ideological influences to bear upon the masses are poorly used.

Scientific elaboration of problems of atheism is weak. Those of our scientific institutions which are concerned with problems of atheism have published very few works on the religious ideology of the present day, although the need for such works is enormous. Nor have any satisfactory investigations of changing attitudes been published. They have not been published because, to get down to essentials, they are no one's serious concern.

Popular atheist literature published in the postwar years does not meet the needs of the propagandists of atheism. In practice major emphasis is given to lectures read at sporadic intervals. But lectures alone cannot combat what the preachers do in systematic fashion over a long period of time.

True, other forms and methods of work have come into use in recent years: there are evenings built around specific themes, question-and-answer evenings, theoretical conferences, gatherings around individuals who have broken with religion. But these measures are not always carried out at the required level. *The most effective form of anti-religious propaganda is systematic individual work with the faithful within their homes.* It is this that must be stressed to counteract the activities of the churches.

The resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU, "Goals of Party Propaganda Under Present-Day Conditions," emphasizes that ideological work must be accessible to the individual. It must

be pointed out that this directive is still weakly applied to our anti-religious propaganda. Our propagation of atheism is often carried on among the irreligious, while the religious remain outside the scope of our influence.

Study of concrete manifestation of religious feelings among the masses makes possible a differentiated, concrete approach to overcoming survivals of religion. Since, as has been stated, religion is most widespread among women, attention must be directed chiefly to anti-religious work among them. Women must be drawn into public affairs as active participants; this is the most important condition for liberating them from the narcotic of religion.

We must be equally specific in our approach to anti-religious work among youth and children, among the collective farm peasantry and among groups of workers and intellectual workers where nationality is a factor.

The use by the religious of new and more refined methods of propaganda is accompanied by corresponding changes in the field of religious ideology. We must not assume that the ideology of religion is unchanging or constant. Profound social changes inevitably affect the content of religious ideology. And although the teachings of the churches remain fundamentally stagnant and anti-scientific, it is nonetheless impossible not to see the changes that have occurred in the propagation of religious teachings in our country in the recent past. This derives from the special position of the church under conditions of socialist society. The ideologists of religion have been forced to adapt themselves to new conditions, to the changes that have occurred in the consciousness of the working people. But these changes affect only particular aspects of the teachings of religion, not its essence.

Our Party press (the magazine *Kommunist*, 1958, No. 7; *Pravda*, August 29, 1959) has already directed attention to the fact that in the recent past church leaders, and in particular the members of minority denominations, have for the purpose of adapting themselves to our Soviet reality taken the path of reconciling science with religion and of identifying Christianity with communism. They advocate an "alliance" between science and religion. They advance the concept that religion and science not only are not contradictory, but on the contrary supplement each other and that therefore a connection between them is natural and necessary.

The ideologists of Christianity assert that Christianity is kin to communism, that Christ was allegedly the first to appeal to man for liberty, equality and fraternity. As far back as the thirties the Baptists contended that Christ was allegedly the world's first socialist and communist. Recently the adherents of Orthodoxy, and particularly those of the lesser denominations, have been giving greater attention to problems of morality. They assert that religion is the chief support of morality, that morality is impossible without religion. They strive to depict themselves as the moral teachers of man.

In their efforts to bring about an alliance between socialism and Christianity the ideologists of religion seek to use moral arguments. The churchmen of today hold that the religious standards of the morality they preach affect various aspects of the life of society. "The sword of God," no less, sheds light on social phenomena and assists people to understand them. "It is true that Christianity does not establish legal standards or the external forms of social organization. But as the religion of 'spirit and truth' (John: 4:23), it contains eternally valid ideas and, directly or indirectly, assists the progress and improvement of human society" (*Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhy*, 1958, No. 2, p. 74).

The Russian Church sought to establish a tie between religion and the ideology of science even in pre-Revolutionary times, but this was not widespread. Religion was the dominant ideology in tsarist Russia and the servants of the church felt that their position was quite secure. When comparing faith and atheism, churchmen employed as their chief argument against atheism the fact that it was adhered to by fewer persons than those who professed religious beliefs. In our scientific age the ideologists of religion are compelled to give more attention to problems having to do with the relationship between science and religion.

Clarification of all these problems will doubtless reinforce our ideological struggle with religious prejudices.

A concrete approach to the ideology of the religious organizations of the day and concrete consideration of the specific features of the religious individual will strengthen our ideological struggle with religious prejudice, that most harmful and tenacious carry-over of the past.

## Allocation of the Soviet Labor Force in Productive and Nonproductive Areas

By Y. Rusanov

An important discussion taking place among Soviet economists deals with the proportions of the labor force in productive and nonproductive spheres. Broadly speaking, productive labor refers to labor which produces material values while nonproductive labor refers to services, selling, cultural work, etc. Neither term has any moral connotation, but is based on the production or nonproduction of value in Marxist terms. The practical import of this question lies in the fact that advanced economies tend to have an increasing proportion of the labor force work in the nonproductive sphere. According to the data and analysis in this article, this process is taking place in the Soviet Union. "Allocation and Utilization of the Soviet Labor Force During the Seven-Year Plan," *Sotsialistichesky Trud (Socialist Labor)*, 1961, No. 3.

FULFILLMENT of the objectives of the Seven-Year Plan for the development of the Soviet economy requires that additional labor power be drawn into social production and that the country's labor force be rationally distributed and employed. According to the calculations in the target figures, a considerable rise in the numbers of industrial and office workers is envisaged during the Seven-Year Plan because of the enormous scale on which material production is to be expanded; this in addition to a significant expansion of the network of agencies of science and culture, public health, restaurants and dining rooms, stores and services. The census data inform us that the population of the USSR rose by 9.5% from 1939 to 1959, while those of working age increased from 102,000,000 to 119,800,000, or by more than 17%. The greater rate of population growth in the working age range makes for an increase in the number employed in the national economy.

The involvement of the working population in the work of society is governed both by the rates of increase in production and the rise in the productivity of social labor. These two conditions operate in opposite directions: expansion of production assumes an increase in the number of productive individuals; the rise in labor productivity makes it possible to increase the gross volume of production without increasing, or even with somewhat diminishing, the number of persons engaged in the production of material goods.

Here it should be emphasized that growth in material production on the basis of increase in labor productivity will make it possible to increase the number of persons working in the nonproductive sphere, inasmuch as society becomes capable of developing cultural and living services on a larger scale. The planned distribution of labor between material production and the nonproductive sphere, between branches of the economy and the economic districts of the country, is one of the necessary conditions for high rates of expanded socialist reproduction.

The qualitative difference between the labor force engaged in branches of material production and those in the nonproductive sphere lies in the fact that the former participate directly in the production of material goods, increasing the national income, while the latter assist in the success of work in the sphere of material production and participate in the redistribution of the national income, serving the country's working people. Therefore rational distribution of the gainfully employed between the production of material goods and the nonproductive sphere is of enormous economic significance, while problems of perfecting methods of accounting and of planning this distribution acquire major scientific and practical value. Present-day census-of-occupation procedure makes it possible to determine with more or less accuracy the percentage of personnel engaged in material production and in the nonproductive sphere. However, in our opinion the methods employed by the Central Statistical Administration in this respect still require some improvement. These adjustments are needed primarily with respect to those groups of workers engaged in internal commerce and public catering, whose labor is on the one hand involved with the production of material goods, while on the other it falls into the nonproductive category.

According to the data of the Central Statistical Administration the

distribution of workers between the productive and the nonproductive spheres of the USSR economy is as follows:\*

	As Percentage of Total				
	1940	1950	1955	1958	1959
In the branches of material production	87.9	86.2	85.2	84.2	83.9
In the nonproductive branches	12.1	13.8	14.8	15.8	16.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\**Narodnoye khozyaistvo SSSR v 1959 godu. Statisticheskii Yeshegodnik. Gosstatistdat, 1960, p. 584.*

It must be borne in mind that the Central Statistical Administration considers all personnel in commerce and public catering to belong in the sphere of material production. But it is specifically in these branches that less than half the work goes into further processing the product while the bulk goes into its realization [sale — Ed.]. Marx classified the labor of workers in commerce with material production only to the degree that it involves a continuation of the process of commodity production (storage, packaging, classification, etc.). The work of those who are engaged in service (salespeople, waiters, etc.) bears this same relationship to the sphere of material production.

The relationship to material production of those workers who do not participate in the productive process distorts the relationships actually existing in the distribution of labor between production and the services.

Thus an analysis of the type of activity of workers in commerce shows that 30% are engaged in the process of commodity production and 36% in public catering. The rest are engaged in realization of the product and in service to the population. In our opinion it is desirable to classify in the category of material production those people in commerce who are engaged in warehousing, in industrial enterprises and the transport function of the world of commerce. Those to be classed as nonproductive are the personnel engaged in realization of the product, the administrative and managerial personnel, etc. In public catering, those persons to be classed in material production are the kitchen help, warehouse workers and vegetable storage personnel, while the salespeople, those working in the dining room as such, the administration and management em-

ployees should be in the nonproductive sphere. The personnel in material and technical supply should be classified wholly in the productive sphere.

The relationship between those working in the productive and nonproductive spheres (on an average annual basis) may be seen from the following data:\*

	Number (In Thousands)			Percentage of Total		
	1940	1956	1959	1940	1956	1959
National economy as a whole	59,795	75,932	80,554	100.	100.	100.
Material production as a whole	50,980	63,430	66,392	85.3	83.5	82.4
<i>Including:</i>						
Industry	10,967	18,500	20,205	18.4	24.4	25.1
Construction	1,563	3,550	4,800	2.6	4.7	6.0
Agriculture and forestry	31,579	31,890	30,254	52.8	42.0	37.6
Transport and communications serving productive purposes	2,927	4,372	5,001	4.9	5.8	6.2
Commerce, the restaurant industry, procurement, supplies of materials and equipment	3,303	3,826	4,394	5.5	5.0	5.4
Other branches of material production	641	1,292	1,738	1.1	1.7	2.2
Nonproductive branches as a whole	8,815	12,502	14,162	14.7	16.5	17.6
<i>Including:</i>						
Housing and urban services	1,221	1,503	1,710	2.0	2.0	2.1
Public health	1,507	2,736	3,248	2.5	3.6	4.0
Education and cultural enlightenment agencies	2,663	4,103	4,549	4.5	5.4	5.6
Science and scientific services	361	1,094	1,462	0.6	1.4	1.8
Transport and communications servicing the nonproductive sphere	976	1,458	1,667	1.6	1.9	2.1
Credit and insurance agencies	262	266	258	0.4	0.4	0.3
Government administration and business management, including cooperatives and membership organizations	1,825	1,342	1,268	3.1	1.8	1.6

\**Spravochnye materialy po trudu i zarabotnoi plate.* NII truda. Moscow, 1960, pp. 21-22.

The total number of persons employed in our national economy in the period 1950-1958 increased by 15.6%, with a constant increase in the percentage employed in the nonproductive sphere. This occurred as a consequence of the rise in social wealth, of increased labor productivity and improvement in the material well-being of the Soviet people.

Certain Soviet economists have expressed concern over a possible increase in the percentage of those occupied in the nonproductive sphere and have advanced suggestions to redistribute labor in favor of the sphere of material production. Fears and suggestions of this type do not in our opinion have either theoretical or practical justification and are based on an erroneous, simplified approach to the problem. The relationship between the number of working people engaged in the various branches of material production and those in the nonproductive sphere depends upon the level of development of the productive forces of society, on the productivity of social labor and the social order. It is not difficult to see that our country has in recent years experienced a rapid rise in the number of working people only in those branches of production either directly connected with production or assisting in the cultural growth and improvement of services to the population. Thus from 1950 to 1958 the personnel in housing and urban services rose by 40.2%, those in public health by 50.5%, those in education by nearly 33% and those in science by 85.7%. At the same time the administrative and managerial personnel of the government and of membership organizations diminished by 29%. Virtually no employment changes occurred in credit and insurance agencies. It is obvious that the increase in employment in the nonproductive sphere was the result primarily of the growth of material production as such, based on the achievements of modern science and technology. These achievements themselves require a considerable increase in employment in certain nonproductive spheres (science, higher and specialized intermediate education, etc.).

The expansion of medical services to the population not only improved the people's health and reduced mortality but has also sharply reduced working time losses. The seriousness of such losses is made clear by the fact that in industry alone loss of working time per worker in consequence of various illnesses comes to from 11 to 13 days per year. The improvement and expansion of medical

services will make possible a substantial reduction in illness and consequently an increase in the actual working time.

The more rapid the development of the forces of production and the productivity of labor as a whole, the greater the portion of that labor allocated to the nonproductive sphere of socialist society. The rates of increase in employment in the nonproductive sphere exceed the rates of increase in employment in material production; as a consequence the proportion of those employed in the nonproductive sphere rises somewhat relative to the whole. This type of redistribution of labor resources will be one of the most important factors in the further improvement of public health, the expansion of housing and public services and the development of science and art.

In characterizing the significance of the growth of labor productivity for changes in the relative distribution of the labor force between the productive and nonproductive spheres, Marx wrote: "Let us assume that the productivity of industry has risen to the point that whereas hitherto  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the population participated directly in material production, today only  $\frac{1}{3}$  is so engaged. Hitherto  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the population produced the means of existence of  $\frac{3}{3}$  of the population; today  $\frac{1}{3}$  produces for  $\frac{3}{3}$ . Formerly "net income" (as distinct from the income of the worker) was  $\frac{1}{3}$ ; now it is  $\frac{2}{3}$ . Now the nation — if we disregard (class) contradiction — will make use of  $\frac{1}{3}$  of its time for direct production instead of the former  $\frac{2}{3}$ . If distribution were uniform, all would have more time —  $\frac{2}{3}$  — for nonproductive labor and recreation."<sup>\*</sup>

Thus Marx recognized that an increase in the productivity of social labor could be accompanied by a substantial rise in the percentage of labor engaged in nonproductive work. However, a rise in the level of employment in the nonproductive sphere is different in social nature. This depends upon the social system and results in different social consequences.

In modern capitalist society an increase in the share of the labor of society expended in the nonproductive sphere reflects advancing parasitism and decay. Enormous numbers of persons are occupied in the government apparatus, in financial agencies and banks, in commerce. A great mass of living labor is expended upon personal

<sup>\*</sup>Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Vol. I, 1955, p. 190 (Russian edition).

services to the exploiting classes. Ever-increasing numbers of working people are unable to find employment and are condemned by capitalism to hunger and poverty.

Under socialism the development of the nonproductive sphere depends mainly upon the increase in labor productivity in material production, primarily in industry. In turn, the nonproductive sphere has a positive influence upon the productive forces and the productivity of social labor. This is manifested with particular clarity in the growth of employment in science. Marx repeatedly referred to science as a productive force and emphasized its enormous influence upon the development and improvement of production. Education and public health also exercise a direct effect upon improvement of production and the growth of labor productivity. In this connection it should be noted that increase in the personnel of the nonproductive sphere occurs not as a consequence of reductions in the numbers employed in the production of material wealth but essentially as a consequence of the natural increase in the employable population. In the USSR the number of persons engaged in socially useful labor in both productive and nonproductive spheres is continually rising.

An increase in the number of persons engaged in various branches of the nonproductive sphere is entirely natural. But from this it does not follow that any particular nonproductive sphere may not suffer from extravagant employment of living labor.

The distribution of workers in certain branches of the nonproductive sphere in our country has had nonuniform geographic results, particularly in public health, in science and the arts, and in housing and urban services. Let us consider public health. In 1959 there was an average of 17.9 physicians per 10,000 population for the USSR. But Georgia had 31.4, Azerbaidzhan 21.9, Armenia 21.8, Latvia 24.2, Estonia 22.4, Belorussia 13.3, Tadzhikistan 11.2, Kazakhstan 12.7, Moldavia 12.8. The distribution of medical men among the various regions within the republics is even more uneven. Further improvement in medical services requires not only an increase in the total number of medical personnel but a more uniform distribution of medical men by region, with particular attention to further improvement in medical services to the rural population.

It is characteristic, however, that personnel is increasing more

rapidly in the decisive spheres of material production than in the service field. In the nonproductive sphere, the number of employed persons rose by 26.4% from 1950 to 1958, while in industry the rise was 38.5% and in construction 44.4%. Therefore, despite the fact that the percentage of personnel in the nonproductive sphere is continually rising and the service sphere in particular acquiring ever greater importance in the life of our society, the decisive role in changing the structure of employment still belongs to the production of material goods. The rates of development of the major branches of industry, the increase in labor productivity and the equipment available to it define the relative distribution of the labor force both among the branches of material production and in the nonproductive sphere.

The development of industrial production and the rise in available equipment are accompanied on the one hand by an increase in productive personnel and on the other by a change in its composition. The proportion of highly skilled workers has increased considerably. With greater all-round mechanization and automation of the processes of production workers are increasingly freed from monotonous physical effort and their labor becomes increasingly creative, many-sided, requiring a combination of physical and mental labor. One result of all this has been a rapid increase in labor productivity and gross production in all branches of the economy, particularly in industry and construction.

Determination of the level of labor expenditure in industry and agriculture is of great importance in the study of the distribution and utilization of the available labor supply. These two branches of the economy account for the production of the material goods required for human life and about 66% of all those gainfully employed. In 1959 average annual employment in agriculture was 33,000,000 while in industry the number was 20,200,000 or nearly 13,000,000 less than in agriculture.

The rates of increase in gross production and in labor productivity are considerably higher for industry than for agriculture. Thus gross industrial production increased by 330% from 1940 to 1958, labor productivity by 140% and the number of persons productively employed in industry by nearly 100%. In agriculture, gross production rose during this period by only 50%, labor productivity by 70% and there was a small decline in employment. Thus the gross production

of industry rose more than six times and labor productivity more than twice as fast as gross production and labor productivity in agriculture.

Despite the all-round development of agricultural production, it remains to a considerable degree a seasonal occupation. This results in nonuniform utilization of the labor force on collective farms. For purposes of more rational distribution of this labor force it is necessary, particularly in winter, to expand the construction of enterprises for local processing of agricultural raw materials. This will make it possible to bring the processing industry close to the sources of its raw material, its labor force and the areas of consumption. Agriculture has major labor reserves which, properly utilized, will make it possible to achieve a large-scale rise in the production of agricultural produce.

Concrete measures have been taken in recent years for a sharp upturn in agriculture. These have greatly improved the rates of its progress. A great deal of attention is now being given to further increases in agricultural production, its all-round mechanization and electrification, and improvement in the organization of labor. The Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held in January 1961 defined specific directions to be followed to achieve these increases. All this creates conditions for accelerating the rise in agricultural labor productivity and for more efficient utilization of the rural labor force. The possibility now arises for freeing a certain portion of this labor force and transferring it to other branches of the economy, particularly to industry and construction.

In the present Seven-Year Plan there will also be an increase in the personnel of commerce. The rapid rise in industrial and agricultural production has created favorable conditions for the further development of commerce and the restaurant industry. The target figures for the development of the economy from 1959 to 1965 envisage a 62 to 65% rise in the national income, permitting an increase of 60 to 63% in consumption. The bulk of consumption takes place, as we know, via Soviet commerce and the restaurant industry. It follows therefore that the number of persons occupied in these branches must be larger than at present. It must be noted that the expansion of the network of retail outlets has lagged in the past decade behind the growth in sales. The increase in outlets

which has actually occurred allows for the population to be satisfied only within the limits of natural population increase. This becomes evident when we consider that the number of retail outlets has shown virtually no increase per 10,000 population. However, this is not the full picture. The purchasing power of the population rises from year to year; therefore a situation where the number of retail outlets per 10,000 population remains static cannot satisfy present-day requirements. The retail business done by the government and cooperative systems rose by 170%, in comparable prices, from 1940 to 1958, whereas per capita business increased 150%. From 1950 to 1958 sales of foodstuffs and other commodities rose by 96%. However, the number of personnel engaged in commerce and the catering industry rose by only 31% from 1940 to 1958; the increase from 1950 to 1958 was 23%. In a number of towns, and to a greater degree in the countryside, the retail network is to this day utterly inadequate. In connection with the rapid rates of increase in production, the present Seven-Year Plan will see a substantial rise in the volume of commodities offered for sale. This will result in expansion of the marketing network and the catering industry. As compared to 1958 the number of persons engaged in marketing and the catering industry will, according to the target figures, be increased by 45% in 1965.

The structure of employment in the catering industry will change as a consequence of reorganization. Toward the end of the Seven-Year Plan the personnel engaged in cooking will constitute nearly half of the total number employed in this field. There will be a corresponding reduction in the proportion of personnel engaged solely in the sale of the finished product. The further development of Soviet commerce and of the catering industry will have a positive effect upon the well-being of the people and will facilitate liberation of the employable population from housework and work in family garden plots, thus making it possible for them to go into social production.

In the course of the building of socialism, it is necessary to rectify a certain historically-conditioned geographical unevenness of distribution of the labor force in the country. The target figures for the development of the economy in 1959-1965 envisage exploitation of the rich and vast natural resources of the eastern regions. Coal and steel centers will be established in Siberia and Kazakhstan;

a large chemical industry will be developed in the eastern areas, as will petroleum processing and other branches of industry. About 40% of all capital investment during the present Seven-Year Plan will be in the east. This requires a corresponding redistribution of the labor force. Today the geographic distribution of the population is described by the following data (expressed in percentages): 1.6% in the Northern European portion of the USSR; 4.5% in the Northwest; 20.3% in the Central regions; 6.0% along the Volga; 4.2% in the North Caucasus; 8.5% in the Urals; 5.5% in Western Siberia; 3.3% in Eastern Siberia; 2.1% in the Far East; 11.3% in Central Asia and Kazakhstan; 4.5% in the Transcaucasus; 21.6% in the South; 6.6% in the West.

Thus 41.9% of the population is concentrated in the central and southern districts of the European portion of the USSR; 77.8% is in Europe and the Urals and only 22.2% in Asia. This distribution of the country's labor force is not in accord with that of its natural resources and the prospects for the development of the eastern districts. According to computations by the Labor Research Institute the development of the national economy of the USSR envisaged by the Seven-Year Plan will require the resettlement of a portion of the employable population from the central regions to the east. A more rational utilization of the labor force will also require its redistribution during the Seven-Year Plan with particular emphasis upon a shift from country to city.

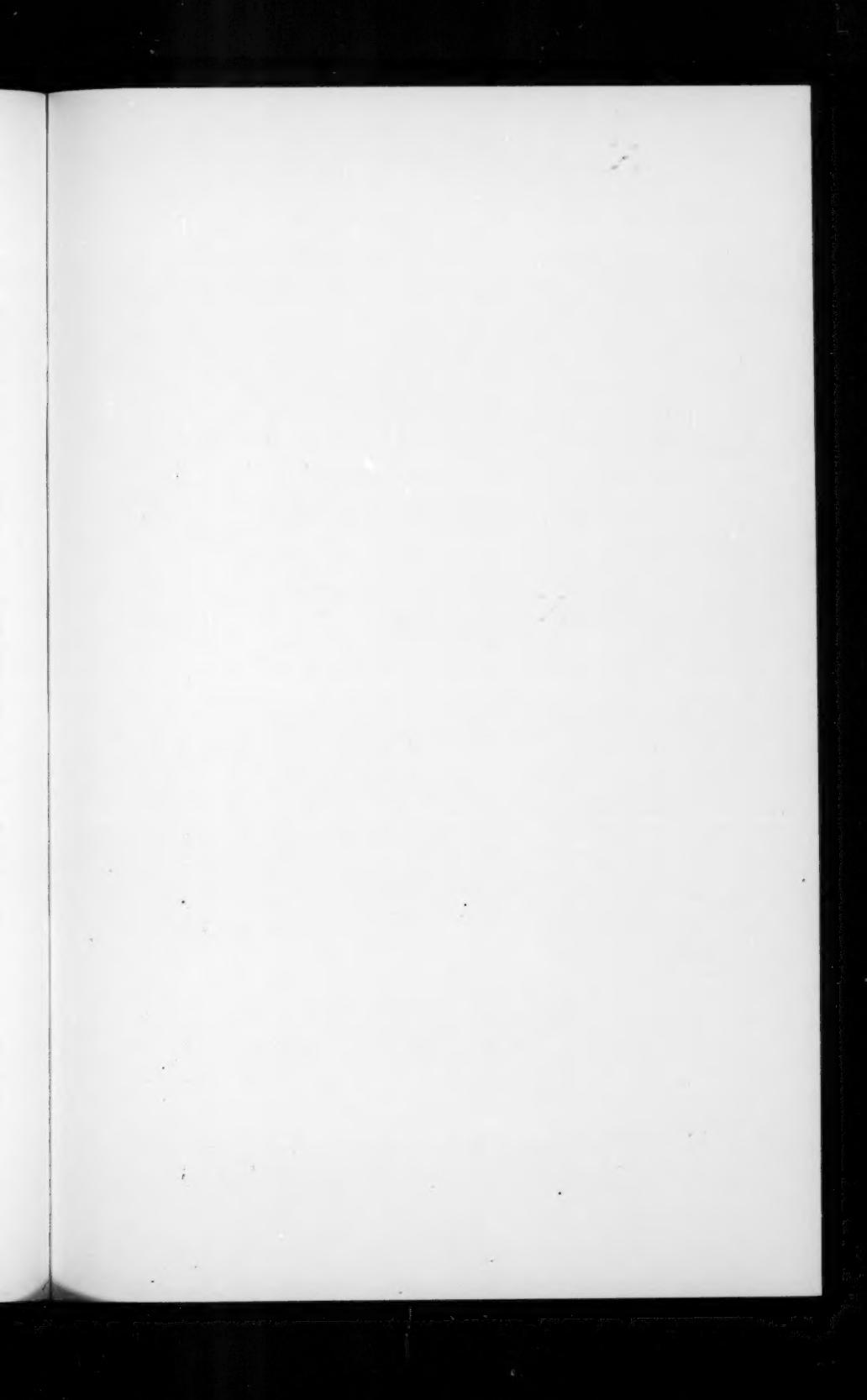
It was thought until recently that the main means of attracting personnel to areas just being opened to economic development, and inducing them to remain, would be higher wage scales and a variety of additional monetary bonuses. Experience has shown however that high wages alone do not insure the retention of personnel. The majority of those who go to the eastern districts think of themselves as temporary residents and subsequently return home. Thus in the Kamchatka economic region, where the wage level is the highest in the country, labor turnover in 1957-1958 was 75% of the average total local labor force.

The main emphasis in attracting personnel to remote areas and keeping them there must therefore be on good living and cultural conditions. This means that the economy of these areas must undergo multi-faceted development. Along with branches of heavy industry it will be necessary to set up intensive agriculture, to develop

light and foodstuffs industries and model urban services and to build housing on a large scale.

The regional economic councils and the individual enterprises face a serious problem — that of improving the organization of labor so as to assure rational utilization of the working force, and also a reduction in the workday. Reduction in working time by a single hour, with the level of labor productivity remaining unchanged, would require an increase of not less than 1,700,000 persons in industry alone. It is quite obvious that successful implementation of these measures requires further rapid growth in labor productivity on the basis of improvement in the organization of the labor process and rational utilization of personnel. Conversion to the shorter workday in 1956-60 has demonstrated that all the preconditions now exist for converting the vast bulk of our enterprises to the new work schedule without adding to the labor force.

Under conditions of socialist production, the economy of congealed [labor embodied in means of production—Ed.] and living labor is an inviolable law of social development. Basing itself on this, our government distributes the country's labor resources in planned and rational fashion. The practical solution of related problems is of major importance to the further development of the socialist economy and the successful fulfillment of the Seven-Year Plan.



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